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[AS HE DID SO THE DOOR OPENED AND HALF OF MISS WITCHWOOD APPEARED.]

THE HEARTS OF THREE GOOD WOMEN.

BY PIERRE LECLERCQ.

CHAPTER VII.

"DO YOU SEE NOTHING THERE?"

MISS ELWORTH being extremely unlike other pupils, Godrey made up his mind to teach her drawing in a manner unlike other masters.

He knew that she would grow tired in an hour of forming the usual preparative objects, and so he boldly commenced the first lesson, at a point which another drawing-master would have reached after fifty or more.

Miss Elworth was a peculiar pupil. Godrey would be a peculiar teacher.

Eve seated herself in the arm-chair which her aunt had occupied when Godrey had first seen her, and crossed her pretty little hands upon her lap. This time her dress was dark blue. Her golden hair hung loosely down her back. Godrey took a chair opposite to her, and looked

at her smilingly for an instant. She seemed then to be very delicate, excessively pretty, and quite sane.

"I have been thinking, Miss Elworth," said Godrey, not knowing whether to speak to her as if she were a child or a woman, and therefore speaking rather clumsily, "that you will be better pleased by our commencing, not at the beginning, but in the middle."

"Oh, yes, that will be charming. I was afraid you would be boring me with lines and curves, and semicircles, and wine-glasses, and boxes, and jugs."

She stopped suddenly, and in a hushed voice said:

"You went to the Priory with my aunt yesterday. Oh, Mr. Overside, did you keep the promise that you made me in the hall? You did not tell her, did you, Mr. Overside?"

Godrey had been told to frame his conduct in whatever way seemed well to him. He did so.

"Miss Elworth," he said, rather seriously, "when you are in this room you are my pupil; our purpose, a drawing-lesson. When we leave this room, with the lesson over, I shall be happy to speak with you on any subject you please."

Eve looked surprised. She pulled some of the golden hair over her shoulder, and lightly held

the ends of it between her teeth. Godrey cut a lead pencil. Eve dropped the hair.

"You are as business-like as aunt," she said, with a laugh. "I thought you were quite the reverse. You are right. I am wrong. You are a little too right, I think; but that does not matter. I beg your pardon. Let us begin at once."

The first lesson accordingly began, and in this odd manner.

Godrey and his pupil were both to sketch roughly a certain angle of the library, which embraced shelves of books, a small writing-desk, and a part of one of the windows. They were to draw independently of each other. At the expiration of twenty minutes the two drawings were to be laid side by side.

Godrey would then point out to his pupil the differences between the drawings, explain where she was wrong, and why she was wrong and he was right, giving her also any information for her future guidance which happened to spring naturally from her present mistakes.

It was a foolish plan, possibly, but it was successful with Miss Elworth.

The rapidity with which she comprehended his meanings was astounding. For instance:

"Look at my window curtains."

"Yes, I see them. Beautiful!"

"Look at yours."

"Yes—they are wrong—I know—quite wrong—they seem to be of the same material as the books. Shall I guess what I ought to have done to make them right?"

"Yes."

She guessed, and rightly! expressing exactly what he would have said himself in her own impulsive way; and on some occasions expressing more, and unconsciously giving him new ideas, or placing an old subject in a newer and truer light than it had ever previously appeared to him.

Miss Elworth sketched the angle a second time, with her master looking over her shoulder, and correcting her whenever she was about to repeat a mistake of the former drawing, which happened very rarely. After which, and a short dissertation from Godfrey on the art of drawing generally, and the angle and the three sketches of it particularly, the first lesson came to an end.

Eve was too eager to run and show Miss Witchwood the second sketch to stay and repeat her question to Godfrey as to whether he had "told aunty;" indeed, she appeared to have forgotten it entirely.

Miss Witchwood was very pleased with the result of the first drawing-lesson. Eve talked of nothing else for the remainder of the day, and Mrs. Barrycourt pretended that she had the greatest difficulty in distinguishing Godfrey's sketch of the angle from Eve's.

But Miss Elworth, whose words and behaviour throughout the lesson, the luncheon, the dinner, and the evening were perfectly rational, and almost ordinary, was not to be deceived by flattery.

Laughing very gaily, and patting the old lady's cheeks with her fair hands, Eve declared that Mrs. Barrycourt's difficulty in distinguishing between the two sketches did not prove that hers was anything like so good as Mr. Overside's, but simply that Mrs. Barrycourt was a very bad judge of drawing.

The second lesson, which took place on the following morning, was equally successful. Miss Elworth's behaviour throughout was equally rational.

During the second lesson Godfrey settled the question that had a little bothered him on the previous morning. Miss Elworth was not seventeen years of age, but, in spite of her slight, frail figure and airy beauty, she appeared considerably older.

The ghastly images mentioned by Miss Witchwood had made some strong impressions on Eve's fair face. At some times they were more apparent than at others—when she laughed she looked as young as fifteen, but when she thought deeply she looked older than her aunt.

The circumstance which led Godfrey to decide this particular question was this.

Miss Elworth having shaded the trunk of a tree in a way which she considered very clever, turned her face from the sketch towards Godfrey, who was standing behind her chair, and asked his opinion on the sketch exultingly. Three inches of space divided their faces, and Godfrey, regarding her as a child, and delighted by the talent she had displayed, was about to express his approval by giving her forehead a father-like kiss.

Instinctively Miss Elworth seemed to divine his intention. Her pale face, neck and ears turned to an indignant pink, and, withdrawing her face quickly, she bent it over the sketch again, and plied her pencil hurriedly and recklessly.

Godfrey did not beg her pardon. He considered her a very foolish child, but he decided the question thus:

"Miss Elworth must be treated as a woman."

The morning on which the third lesson took place was a very dull one. A drizzling rain tapped dismally on the window panes of the library, and the skies were so black, and the atmosphere so heavy, that they were forced to light the library lamp.

It was evident to Godfrey that his pupil was labouring under a slight depression of spirits.

He suggested to Miss Witchwood that the lesson should be postponed. Miss Witchwood left the matter to her niece. Her niece desired a lesson that morning. At the usual hour accordingly the lesson began.

Eve commenced by begging Godfrey to allow her to "do faces," for which she said she had already acquired some ability. Taking into consideration the slight depression of spirits, Godfrey gave her her own way. He selected from his portfolio a classic female head, and requested Eve to make a copy of the drawing.

Eve set to work at once. Godfrey placed himself behind her chair. She drew very rapidly, and talked very rapidly at the same time, though rather nervously, Godfrey thought.

She told him (without once taking her eyes from the drawing-paper) that she was "really quite clever at faces," that she had often sketched in her incorrect, untutored style the faces of persons whom she had only seen once, that some day she would make a drawing of his face and give it to him, that she had frequently drawn her own, but that her aunt and Mrs. Barrycourt, and even the servants, had all declared that they were nothing like her, which proved, she said, that she was not very vain, or else she would have known her face better, through looking at it in the glass.

The nervousness just apparent in her voice when she had commenced talking increased to a considerable extent. Godfrey noticed that the hand which held the pencil was trembling violently, though it still hurried over the paper and copied the woman's head correctly. Also, that the hand which was placed on the drawing paper was tightly clenched.

He was uncertain as to what he had better do. He decided that she was simply nervous, that when the head was finished the lesson should be terminated for that day.

She still went on talking and drawing, both rapidly, the voice and the pencil both trembling. She had been employed for nearly a quarter of an hour in sketching the head, yet she had not taken her eyes off the paper for a second.

Godfrey peeped over her shoulder.

He saw that she was biting her under lip severely, that her teeth had passed through its flesh and met.

From the wound she had made a thin streak of blood trickled down her chin and then fell in one small spot upon the drawing paper on which her eyes were bent so closely.

As it fell she gave a low, quivering moan, raised her face from the paper, and gazed straight before her at the library window.

"Don't move!" she whispered, "don't move! but look at it! Oh, dear, Mr. Overside, look at it, and send it from me."

His first impulse was to summon Miss Witchwood. His second to battle with Miss Elworth's madness alone. He could never tell why, but he obeyed the second impulse.

Still standing behind her chair, he placed a hand firmly on each of her shoulders. Something, half laugh and half sigh, escaped her lips. She put her hands on his, but still fixed her eyes on the library window.

"Do you see nothing there?" she whispered, huskily. "In front of us, between the window curtains. Look, oh, look! and send it from me."

"I see nothing," said Godfrey, trying, but failing, to speak in his usual voice. "There is nothing. You are ill simply, and are frightened at a natural effect of your illness."

"No, no! I knew it was there when I began that drawing. I knew it. I could feel that it was glaring at me, and I tried, oh! so hard, Mr. Overside, to keep my eyes on the paper away from it. Oh, Heaven! oh, aunt! it's coming nearer! it's coming nearer!"

"My child, answer me this question if you can. What is this thing you fancy you see? Is it like an animal, or a fairy, or a Christmas story goblin?" his voice trembled, notwithstanding all his efforts, "or a man, or what, eh? Shut your eyes and tell me. Come."

"I can't, oh, I can't!"

"Can't do what?"

"Can't shut my eyes! Oh, if I could!"
"Then tell me with your eyes open! Go on!"

"It is the face of a man, look! look! a demon-like face, a dreadful face! Nearer! Nearer!"

"A man, is it?" he interrupted, more firmly than he had spoken at first. "I thought so. I tell you there is no one in this room mortal or immortal but a stupid little lady and her drawing master. Now, let us say for the sake of argument that there is a man by those window curtains, that he has come to harm you?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Well, what of it? We are not afraid. Your hands are on mine. Use your hands, Miss Elworth. Feel mine. Are they weak or are they strong?"

"Strong! strong!" with a strange laugh.

"Are they the hands of a friend or of a foe?" he asked.

She did not answer. Her eyes were still fixed on the library window. Godfrey suppressed an involuntary shudder. He had spoken to her, by a great effort, lightly. He was far from feeling as he spoke. Her horrible fear was so intense, so silent.

Godfrey was not a coward, but he had not the courage to place himself in front of her. He felt that nothing could have tempted him to stand with his back to the library window and his face to her eyes. He imagined that her expression while she was labouring under that dreadful delusion must be awful. He imagined rightly.

He began to regret that he had not summoned Miss Witchwood at the first. His voice sounding very loud and horribly unnatural, he repeated his question.

"Are my hands the hands of a friend or of a foe?"

She rose slowly from her chair, her eyes still on the imaginary face. She moved a few inches to the right of the chair.

"Of a friend," she whispered, then with another low moan, "Oh, it's nearing me—it's nearing me!"

Godfrey (again he did not know why) put his left arm round her waist and his right hand over her eyes.

They stood so silently for some minutes.

Eve shuddered—then broke from him with the words:

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Overside!"

"It has gone?"

"Yes. Thanks to you, Mr. Overside!"

Godfrey felt as if he had emerged from some foul, fetid atmosphere into pure, fresh air. The room looked different directly Eve declared that "it" had gone. He breathed a sigh of relief.

For some minutes Eve sat with her face covered by her hands. When she withdrew them he saw that her face bore not the slightest trace of her late mad fear. Saving for the wound on her under lip it was exactly the same as when she had first entered the library that morning.

"I'm quite well now, thank you, Mr. Overside," she said, with a little shudder. "See, how well I am."

She caught hold of the window curtains and moved them to and fro with an air of triumph.

"This is the seventh time that face has haunted me," she said, quite calmly. "It is a very terrible face—very terrible. Would you like to see it?"

"No, thank you," said Godfrey, with a forced laugh, "though I daresay I have seen many faces as unpleasant. When one is ill, you know, one's vision is often whimsical—like yours."

"No, but I do not mean see it really."

"What do you mean, Miss Elworth? though I think it would be better to leave the subject altogether."

"I tell you," she said, "that I am quite well now, Mr. Overside. Did I say to you this morning that I was very clever in sketching faces?"

"You did, Miss Elworth."

"Would you like to see one of these sketches?"

"Yes."

"You shall," she said; "I will show you one that I drew late one night in my own room with—"

out once looking over my shoulder—one that I drew from memory."

She gave another little shudder.

"Whose face is it?" asked Godfrey.

"The face that troubled me so shockingly just now," she answered.

She jerked her head in the direction of the library window.

She left her chair, shook the window-curtains again laughingly and then walked to the door.

"Where are you going to, Miss Elworth?"

"To my own room," she said, "to fetch that sketch."

Before he could speak or stop her she had left the library. He blamed himself again for not summoning Miss Witchwood at the first, yet unaccountably he felt certain that Miss Elworth's madness would not return again that day.

In less than a minute she re-entered the library. In her hand was a sheet of note paper, on one side of which was the Witchwood crest and motto "J'ai dit," on the other side Eve's sketch of the face. She kept her eyes purposely from the paper.

"I am sure," she said, "that that horrid face will come to me no more. Look at it, Mr. Overseide, and then destroy it—burn it."

As she put the sheet of note paper into his hand Miss Witchwood knocked at the library door. Godfrey opened the door and Miss Witchwood entered.

She had simply come to suggest that as her niece was not well the lesson should be a short one. Eve placed her arm round her aunt's waist and commenced to tell her very calmly of what had occurred and how cleverly Mr. Overseide had driven away the fancied face.

Godfrey (his back to the ladies) walked to the mantelpiece. He looked at the sketch.

It was badly proportioned, but very bold, life-like, and grotesque. The hair, teeth and ears of a savage animal—the rest of the face and head of a hideously distorted man.

The first look startled him, for the strange face bore a marvellous resemblance to Annie's brother, he thought.

A revolting caricature of the large, clever face of Tom Sheene.

He looked again, and thought himself a fool for thinking there was a resemblance between the ugly drawing and Tom's face.

The second look convinced him that there was positively nothing of the kind.

He crumpled the sheet of note paper in his hand and threw it into the fire.

CHAPTER VIII.

"PASK WOULD LAY HIS LIFE DOWN FOR ME, IF I WANTED IT!"

Poor little Annie!

There were so many things to remind her of him, so that, as she said to herself:

"Even if I did not care for him a bit I should be forced to think of him all day."

There were things at home, at the shop, and in the walk between the two, and yet although they made her sad she courted the sight of them.

How could she help thinking of him when her very collar, cuffs, and pocket-handkerchiefs spoke to her about him with a breath redolent of his tobacco?

She had found an old meerschaum pipe of his, and had wrapped it up and put it away carefully in the drawer where she kept those articles. She had done, in fact, a quantity of foolish things since Godfrey had gone to Pondcourt.

She had cleansed her teeth with the ashes of his last cigar. She had put on an old velvet jacket and a hat of his, and stood before the looking-glass trying to screw her pretty little face into the expression of mock solemnity which Godfrey's face had worn occasionally. She had crept from her own bedroom to his at night—so very empty it seemed—and knelt by the side of his bed to say her prayers.

She had read the letters he had sent from Pondcourt over and over again—had kissed each

sheet, each page, each line of them—had read them at night and placed them under her pillow, and read them again in the morning directly her eyes were open.

She had gazed on the little gold watch till its face had become so dim to her eyes that it did not look like a watch at all; she had held it in her hands and nodded her pretty little head at it and talked to it as though it had been a baby or a pet-dog.

She had looked at a railway guide, solely to read the name of Pondcourt; at a dingy gazetteer of her mother's simply to read what it said of Pondcourt; at a map of England, only to look at the spot marked Pondcourt; at a post-office directory to see whether the names "Barrycourt," "Elworth," or "Witchwood" were there, and if so how they looked in print!

Poor, brave, uncomplaining little Annie!

On the morning on which Godfrey had given Miss Elworth her second lesson Annie was seated behind the counter of the little fruit shop. Her eyes were on the gas stove, her hands on a piece of red flannel of mysterious shape, and her thoughts on Godfrey.

The fruit shop had few customers in winter time, so Annie had very little to occupy her mind or hands. In summer she was always busy enough, for the little fruit shop was noted for its strawberries and cream.

As she sat there she pictured Pondcourt House—its exterior, with the surrounding country, of which he had written—and its interior, with the three ladies, of whom also he had written, though of course with certain reservations.

Godfrey considered correctly that it would have been a breach of confidence to have recounted Miss Witchwood's story to anyone—even to Annie—and so he had not done so. He had in his letters to Annie described the personal appearance of the inmates of Pondcourt House with great accuracy, but he had not gone further than that. He had written that he liked them all, but he had not written that his pupil was mad. There was no necessity to trouble Annie with that item of news, and that had she known it it would have troubled her Godfrey had no doubt.

Annie had inherited certain vague ideas of lunacy and the ways of lunatics from her mother, and had she been told that Miss Elworth was insane she would hourly have expected a telegram from Pondcourt, informing her that Miss Elworth had violently assaulted Mr. Overseide, or performed some other feat equally dreadful and unladylike.

Therefore, in Godfrey's letters to Annie, Miss Elworth was simply "a strange, eccentric child."

Altogether, voluminously as he had written, Annie's notions of the surroundings of the new leaf of Godfrey's life was imperfect; so as she sat in the fruit shop that morning she added the Pondcourt House of his letters to the Pondcourt House of her brain, and pictured one that was midway between the two.

Her brother Tom entered the fruit shop suddenly while she was so employed, and brought a deal of cold air with him.

She raised her eyes, and he saluted her with one of his loudest laughs and the words:

"Good morning, Mr. Overseide!" spoken in his usual rough, blustering way.

"Oh! Tom; how you startled me!" she said, rising and shaking his hand. "And what made you call me Mr. Overseide, I should like to know?"

"Because he is all over your countenance, Miss Annie," replied her brother; "all over the shop. Hang me if I can separate you two, even with him at What's-it's-name and you here. When I talk to Godfrey I think of you, and vice-versa. How's mother?"

"She is very well, Tom."

"And how are you?" he asked, with a broad grin, "or rather how are you at Pondcourt? Have you heard from him this morning?"

"Yes. Twelve sides, and eighteen lines on each!" she answered, lightly, and involuntarily touching her bosom to indicate the place in which she kept Godfrey's current correspondence.

"Oh! Getting on all right?"

"Beautifully, thank you, Tom. He sends his kindest regards to you."

"That's fine!" said Tom, heartily.

"Have you any news, Tom?" asked his sister.

"Yes," he said, with another broad grin. "Two of our provincial agents have been mistaking some of our money for their own. Another fellow and I are going to look over their books, and see, if possible, how they contrived to do it."

"Then you will be going out of town, Tom."

"Exactly, far-seeing young woman. That's the news."

"When, Tom?"

"In three or four days, perhaps."

"It will do you good," she said. "Will you be away for a long time?"

"No; only for a day."

"And where are you going to?" asked Annie, arranging some small apples which were clothed in tissue paper; "to Liverpool, I suppose?"

"Perhaps," said Tom. "Liverpool is one of the places, but very likely the other chap will go there, in which case I shall be sent to the other place. It's a toss-up—a toss-up whether I go at all."

"What is the other place?" asked Annie.

"E—," answered Tom.

"Good gracious, exclaimed Annie, on the strength of the information she had derived from the lately consulted map. "E— is near Pondcourt."

"Really?" asked Tom, a little surprised.

"Really," said Annie, decisively.

"Your geography licks mine to smash," said Tom. "How far is it from Pondcourt, should you think?"

Annie half closed her eyes very learnedly, frowned, produced the two little perpendicular lines before mentioned, and with the thumb and forefinger of her right hand measured in the air the distance between the two places as they were marked in the map.

"Further than that, Annie, I should think," laughed Tom.

"No; you know what I mean," she said. "The scale was—I know! E— is about thirty miles from Noodles—I mean from Pondcourt."

She delivered this with the decided air of a most learned geographer.

"Funny if I should be sent to E—," said Tom.

"Oh! if you are, Tom," said she, "you will run over and see Godfrey in his new home, won't you?"

Tom replied, succinctly:

"I don't think!"

"But why not?" she asked. "It is only natural and civil that you should, you know, and Godfrey would be so glad to see you, and I should be so glad to see someone who had seen Godfrey more recently than I, Tom."

"Nonsense!" laughed her brother. "It couldn't be done."

"But why not?"

"For number one reason, that I should not have the time," answered Tom; "for number two, that Overseide's misadventure p'raps allow not no followers on the premises; and for number three reason, that it is not a week since I last saw him."

Tom, it may be well to add, did not make use of the double negative "not no followers" from ignorance, but from facetiousness.

Annie produced her gravity and slightly pouted at the same time.

"I think you very unkind, Tom," she said.

"Oh! indeed," said Tom, who was really a very good-natured fellow in little matters, and had some affection for his pretty sister. "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. If I go to E— (and it's even betting that I don't, mind!), and if I have a few hours to spare while I am there (which it's tento one I shan't, mind!), I will let Overseide have good notice, and if he can get a holiday from his owners, he can run over to E— and see me and be stood a fill of tobacco. There!"

"Thank you, Tom. That is settled then."
 "Right!" said Tom. "And now I must be off. Seeing you had no one here but Overside I thought I'd look in. Good bye. Love to mother, and all manner of good wishes to Godfrey when you write. Ta, ta!"

And Tom shook his sister's hand violently, and whistling some operatic air correctly and loudly, blustered away from the little fruit shop in great haste. Tom was always in a hurry. He was always anxious to get business finished that he might go to pleasure—always shortening his pleasure that he might get back to business. Always loud and always moving; often vulgar and often to his nearest friends incomprehensible.

Tom was a great favourite, though, amongst the men of his own set.

In the society of ladies he had mixed very little. He was essentially a jolly fellow. It was said of him "that he could do everything," and with some truth. He had a mania for (in his own words) "tackling big things and landing them," though it would seem that he liked the big things to be useless. He had taught himself the German language in three months, and he had taught himself to "screw from baulk off the red on spot into the right-hand top pocket, bringing the red over the left middle" in three days.

He left the little fruit shop in a great hurry. In less than a minute he returned to the little fruit shop, also in great haste.

"Well?" said Annie, as he entered suddenly.
 "A bright idea!" said Tom. "What are you going to do on Sunday—you and the mother?"

"Nothing, Tom, of course. I suppose you will have dinner with us, as usual?"

"No," said Tom, "I have promised to dine with Pask at Brixton."

"Who is this Mr. Pask?" asked Annie.
 "I told you the other night," replied Tom. "He is no end of a jolly fellow—been to India and all the rest of it. He has just bought a small house and connection at Brixton; a very cosy little crib it is too. Pask would lay his life down for me, if I wanted it."

"Because you pulled him out of the water near London Bridge?"

"Exactly," said Tom.

"And what is the bright idea that brought you back?" asked Annie.

"That you and mother should come and dine with me at Pask's next Sunday," he replied.

"Oh! but he has not invited us, has he?"
 "No; but he would be real pleased to see you," said Tom, "for he has often heard me speak of you both, and said how glad he would be if you would come and see him one day, with me. Will you?"

"No, Tom," said Annie, "mother would be very pleased, I daresay, but I would much rather stop at home next Sunday—indeed I would."

She had promised herself a nap after dinner in the large, comfortable room on Sunday. She had promised herself the melancholy pleasure of lying on the sofa, in the twilight, with her eyes closed, to think of Godfrey, and so she refused Tom's invitation.

"Right you are then," said Tom. "I thought it would be a nice little change for you."

"Yes, Tom, thank you."

"Well, will you dine at Pask's on the Sunday after?"

"Yes, Tom; if it's fine."

"Right. I'll fetch you. Love to mother. Good bye."

And Tom Sheene disappeared, and Annie—Annie went on doing such foolish little things as we have mentioned.

Her interview with her brother had lasted some minutes, so when he had gone, by way of a novelty, Annie seated herself by the gas-stove, pulled Godfrey's last letter from her bosom, and read it for the fiftieth time.

She was very childish, perhaps, but if people call you "poor," Godfrey, tell them that it is not quite so—tell them that at any rate you have the heart of an extremely good little woman—show them Annie Sheene.

CHAPTER IX.

"MR. FARRANDS WILL TELL ME SO ON FRIDAY."

To return to Pondcourt House.

After hearing the circumstances of the third drawing lesson Miss Witchwood privately thanked Godfrey for the good influence he had exercised over her niece during her delusion.

Godfrey declared that he deserved no thanks. If he had been the means of banishing Miss Elworth's fit of insanity in a short time—and Miss Witchwood stated that she had never known her niece recover from a delusion of that kind for three or four hours after its seizing her—he had simply been the instrument of chance.

"I rather deserve blame," he said, "for acting on my own responsibility in so serious a matter. I assure you that whatever I said or did was without purpose. I was staggered. I was not master of myself. Luckily, my conduct produced a beneficial effect. Thank chance, Miss Witchwood, and not me."

Miss Witchwood insisted, however, that he had exhibited great tact and consideration, and then the subject was dropped.

Godfrey resolved nevertheless to summon Miss Witchwood's presence at the next outbreak of Miss Elworth's madness.

During the fourth lesson, which took place on a Tuesday morning, nothing worthy of record was said or done.

In the evening, however, the seeds of a matter trivial in itself, but productive of important results, were sown by Miss Witchwood's distant relation, the little somewhat over-dressed lady of sixty, with undecided features, and an abstracted expression—that is to say, Mrs. Barrycourt.

Mrs. Barrycourt was a widow. She had been in the habit of calling her deceased husband "her prop." The husband being deceased, and Mrs. Barrycourt being rather ill informed on worldly matters and generally a person who was nothing without a "prop," Miss Witchwood kindly undertook the office at the death of Samuel Barrycourt, Esquire.

Mrs. Barrycourt possessed a nice sum of money and an only child—a daughter.

The money was banked with Farrands, Farrands, and Trett. The daughter was married, and lived with her husband at Bombay.

Two or three days before the Tuesday of which we are writing Mrs. Barrycourt had received a letter from Bombay, which had set her brains to work on a business for which they were not qualified—thinking.

The Bombay letter told Mrs. Barrycourt that she was a grandmother. Mrs. Barrycourt having only one child, and that child having only been a wife for one year, it will be understood that Mrs. Barrycourt had never been a grandmother before. She was extremely delighted, of course, and the question on which she had been lately pondering was how she was to make a good, substantial present to her baby grandson.

The parents of the baby grandson being in moderate circumstances, Mrs. Barrycourt, after much thought, decided on the nature of the present at last. Mrs. Barrycourt said to herself "Money!"

Being anxious that the child should reap the full benefits of her gift, and be secured from poverty in after life, without any anxiety as to the duration of his grandmother's life, Mrs. Barrycourt, after more thought, was again visited by a dazzling idea. Mrs. Barrycourt said to herself, "Annuity."

Having arrived at these two grand points, Mrs. Barrycourt paused for breath. She had conceived a magnificent idea. She could do no more. She had but the vaguest notions of what was meant by "annuity." That it was to be procured she knew, but in what manner she was unaware. Execution of the magnificent idea was beyond her.

To the point!

Most persons who knew Miss Witchwood sought Miss Witchwood in the hour of distress.

Mrs. Barrycourt unbosomed herself to the

lovely mistress of Pondcourt House on Tuesday evening, in the drawing-room.

Miss Witchwood applauded Mrs. Barrycourt's idea, and advised two things, firstly, the purchase of a "deferred annuity," or "endowment," and secondly, the taking of Mr. Overside into their confidence.

Godfrey was accordingly consulted.

Godfrey knew very little about such matters. He perfectly agreed with Miss Witchwood, however, that a "deferred annuity" was "the thing" to seek.

Miss Witchwood thought that, considering the intricacies of annuities generally, it would be advisable to consult a professional man.

Godfrey wanted to know if Mrs. Barrycourt required a "perpetual annuity." Mrs. Barrycourt really could not tell him.

Mrs. Barrycourt confessed her entire ignorance, and requested to be informed "who sold them."

Miss Witchwood, with a smile, replied that the safest course would be to treat with a first-class Life Insurance Company. She represented, also, that Mrs. Barrycourt would have to pay "a premium," either in a lump sum, or annually.

Mrs. Barrycourt, however, exhibited a great talent for asking several questions bearing on the matter, which were simply unanswerable, and for raising objections to what might happen if a certain something else happened which was impossible.

In the midst of the discussion Godfrey was struck by a brilliant idea on his side. He resolved to write a note to Tom Sheene.

That was the brilliant idea.

The ladies tendered their thanks to Mr. Overside.

Considerably assisted by Miss Witchwood, Godfrey accordingly wrote the letter to Tom, with Mrs. Barrycourt's case stated therein as plainly as was possible, with the multitude of unanswerable questions hanging to it. Tom's advice was solicited. The letter was posted that night.

On the following Thursday morning the reply arrived, and was read aloud to the two ladies concerned.

Tom's letter answered, as far as possible, some of Mrs. Barrycourt's questions, but he augmented the difficulty by asking himself for several necessary scraps of information respecting Mrs. Barrycourt's desires. He enclosed a "prospectus" of the "Apteryx," and begged Godfrey not to scruple to trouble him on the matter "as much as he liked."

Tom's letter also contained the following postscript:

"I start this morning for E— (thirty miles from you)—on business, of course. I shall return to town on Friday night or Saturday morning. I shall be busy, but if you can manage to run over and have a chat with a fellow, do. Love from all. Try and come. —Yours, Tox. To be heard of at Railway Hotel."

Mrs. Barrycourt being extremely anxious that the annuity business should be settled without delay, and believing that an interview with Mr. Sheene would so settle it, Miss Witchwood requested Godfrey to write and ask his friend to do her the pleasure of dining at Pondcourt House, if possible, on whatever evening was most convenient to him.

Godfrey obeyed. He thanked Tom in Miss Witchwood's name as well as his own and gave him Miss Witchwood's invitation.

The letter was addressed to the "Railway Hotel, E—," and was in time to catch the mid-day post to that place.

Again the ladies thanked Godfrey, who was a little anxious that Tom should refuse the invitation because of his loud vulgarity.

Godfrey warned the ladies in a roundabout way that his friend was "not quite a gentleman," however, and then the matter was by unanimous consent closed till Mr. Sheene should reply to the last note.

(Continued on Page 402.)



["YOU KNOW THE SIGNS?" SAID LORD MOWBERY. "I DO," WAS THE REPLY, UTTERED SOFTLY.]

POWER AND POVERTY.

A NEW NOVEL.

(BY OWEN LANDOR.)

CHAPTER XV.

A TRAITOR—SOMEWHERE.

Care, the consuming canker of the mind,
The discord, that disorders a sweet heart's tune,
The abortive bastard of a coward mind,
The lightfoot lackey that runs post by death,
Bearing the letters which contain our end.

THE count came in a step in advance of Murch with a smile upon his face, belied by a deadly paleness of visage and a restlessness in his eyes. He singled out Peggy and addressed her without taking any notice of the others.

"You are to come at once with me," he said, "your mistress is very ill."

"Miss Janet ill!" cried Peggy, springing up. "I left her well this morning."

"She was taken two hours of the time ago," said the count, "and they are in a state that is distracting. There is a cab waiting for you at the door. I am not going back. Will it please you to go at once?"

"I am ready," said Peggy, hastily putting on her bonnet.

"I'll go with you," cried Ben Tomkins; but here the count interposed.

"It is better for miss to go alone," he said, "for then there will be no delay. It is natural for lovers to linger, but it is a case of the most urgent."

"That's true," said Peggy, "and you would have to walk back. You had better stop here with father and mother."

Ben never, or very rarely, disputed a question with her. Her word was law, and he resumed his seat with a disappointed look.

"It is cold to-night," said the count. "May I warm my hands at the fire? And will you see Miss Peggy to the cab? It is natural, but be as quick as possible."

He addressed Ben, who, after a glance at Peggy, got up to see her off. Hasty adieus were taken, and in a few minutes she was gone. The count stood warming his hands by the fire until Ben returned.

"I do not like your climate here," he said, still speaking generally, "so much fog and cold. It chills to the very bones of my body."

"You can have such things as fog and cold abroad," said David Gray. "When I was in Paris one winter for a week I never saw the tops of the houses."

"Ah! yes; they came when we made friends with our old enemy. We owe you the fogs."

He had warmed his hands sufficiently now, and turned to go. With a bow, offered still in a general sense, he walked to the door with a finger on his lip as one meditating.

"Let me see," he said, "which is your place of the hops? What is its name?"

"Hargyle Rooms," suggested Murch.

"No—no," said the count, impatiently; "not a room—not a place for the dance, but the hop place, where the hops for your English beer are sold—"

"Oh, the Borough."

"Yes, that is the place."

"It isn't far from here," said David Gray, rising, "and as it is on my way I'll show you there."

The count did not so readily accept this offer as he might have done, but he did not refuse it. He hoped it was not too much trouble.

"No trouble at all," said Gray. "I want to go to London Bridge Station. I expect to meet a friend there."

So they went together, leaving a wondering and disconsolate trio behind them. Murch was in a mood bordering on melancholy.

"Things are getting a little mixed up," he said, "and my head isn't strong enough to clear 'em. Mr. John murdered, Miss Janet ill, Peggy

queer, and—and I don't like that count chap—no, I don't."

"No more do I," said Ben, gloomily. "I always feel when we meet as if I should like to have one round with him."

"He's a bad lot," said Murch. "But, mother, let us have something to eat."

They had their tea, and afterwards Ben and Murch filled their pipes and smoked for an hour or so. They did not talk much, but they made amends for it by thinking a great deal.

Mrs. Murch went quietly about the room "tidying up" that which had been the perfection of neatness before. But she had a vague restlessness in her mind and wanted something to do.

At ten o'clock they had supper, and after it Ben got ready to go. Having taken an affectionate leave of his intended mother-in-law, he went out of the room accompanied by Murch as far as the door.

"I don't know how you feel," he said, in an undertone, "but I've got a heart as heavy as lead."

"So have I—heavier," replied Murch, "but Peggy's going away has done that."

"Not all of it," said Ben, shaking his head. "I'll bet we hear bad news of some sort before long. Good night!"

They shook hands warmly and parted. It was a miserable night, with heavy rain and sleet falling. The streets were almost empty, and Ben dashed through them at a great rate towards his bachelor home.

Murch went to bed and passed a restless night, haunted by visions of the count, in which he appeared in various forms—sometimes as a snake, at other times as a panther, and always in some repulsive form, but without change of face.

In the morning he awoke heavy and unfreshed, and at the usual time started for the warehouse.

It was his duty to open it and superintend the cleaning thereof, which he did with his usual strict attention to duty—always grumpy there,

he was more grumpy than usual, and the men were glad when the packing and sorting of parcels began, as it left them in a measure to themselves.

Murch was busy preparing some cases for filling when Mr. Cranbury arrived. The merchant passed through the warehouse without looking at him, but immediately there came a message for Murch to go into the counting-house.

"Bad news," muttered the old porter, "but then Janet can't be dead or he would not be here."

His master received him more in anger than sorrow, and Murch anticipated that something had gone wrong with the business. He was mistaken.

"Murch," he said, "I sent for your daughter last night—or perhaps I ought to say that Count Orsiera volunteered to come. Did you see anything of him?"

"Yes, sir," replied Murch, "he came to tell us that Miss Janet was ill, which we were sorry to hear."

"Why on earth, then," demanded Mr. Cranbury, "did you not send Peggy on at once?"

Murch stared at his master, then at the maps on the walls, and finally at the floor. He was so utterly taken aback that he was unable to utter a word.

"I know it was a rough night," continued Mr. Cranbury, "but Peggy has never been treated as an ordinary servant, and we had a right to expect that she would put herself a little out of the way. We have wanted her sorely."

"Master," said Murch, "don't talk in that way or I shall go clean daft. Peggy, as soon as she got the message, went off in a cab. Young Ben Tomkins, him as is courting her, see her into it."

"What are you saying?" said Cranbury, eyeing him sharply.

"It's true, sir. Mr. Gray was in the house, having dropped in promiscuous like, and he knows it. Oh! my poor Peggy, what's become of ye?"

And Murch was so overcome that he forgot all else but the terrible trouble that had come upon him and sat down in a chair wringing his hands piteously.

The merchant was amazed. What new mystery was this that had come to mar his peace? Opening the office door he called for David Gray, and the clerk came.

"Murch tells me that you were at his house last night," Mr. Cranbury said.

"That's true, sir," replied Gray.

"And you saw his daughter leave to go to Clapham?"

"Quite right, sir. She did not lose a moment."

"But we have seen nothing of her. She did not arrive!"

It was David Gray's turn to be astounded, and he stared at Mr. Cranbury as if he feared that he had become demented. The merchant, however, was clear and ready to act.

"Telegraph at once to Count Orsiera and ask him to come here," he said. "Send a message to the Mansion House and ask for an officer to be sent here, and you, Murch, take a cab and fetch this young Tomkins. Lose no time. You may bring your wife too if you like."

By twelve o'clock they were all there—detective, the count, Ben Tomkins, Mrs. Murch and her husband, David Gray and Mr. Cranbury.

On the distress of those to whom Peggy was near and dear it is not necessary to dwell. Suffice it to say that they felt keenly and did their best not to make their grief troublesome.

The count was no longer pale, but he affected the keenest sorrow.

It was quite true that he had been at The Knoll when Janet was taken ill, and he had volunteered to fetch Peggy.

"It was not much to do," he said, "seeing that I was coming to the City to meet a friend—an exiled patriot from my native land."

"You took the cabman to the door," the detective said.

"Ay! to be sure," replied the count; "he was

on his way passing the street, and I gave him the hail."

"You did not take his number?"

"No! Why should I? I am not suspicious."

"Can you give us any idea of his appearance?" asked Mr. Cranbury.

"It was cold and wet, and he was much wrapped up," returned the count. "He had a coat of many capes, and a soft hat drawn over his eyes."

"That's right enough, gentlemen," said Ben Tomkins. "I noticed as much."

"His horse now," said the detective; "what colour was it?"

"Brown, or black; anything but white, I should say," replied the count. "I did not notice it."

"Nor I," said Ben Tomkins.

There was little more to tell. Peggy had got into this cab and been driven away. From that moment she had disappeared from the eyes of her friends.

"But what can have become of her?" asked Mrs. Murch, wringing her hands.

"Has she been seen in any company of late?" asked the detective.

"Company—where?" asked Murch.

"Anywhere. Has she been seen with a young man?"

"I'm her young man," said Ben Tomkins.

"I know that," said the detective, coolly; "but she could have another, I suppose."

"You wrong my daughter, my good man," said Mrs. Murch, bridling up.

"Well, well, don't be angry, ma'am," said the detective, soothingly. "I only put the question. If she had flirted a bit she wouldn't have been any worse than other young parties with good looks."

"And suppose she had spoken to somebody else?" asked Mr. Cranbury.

"Then, sir, it's just possible she might have got into bad company and have been decoyed abroad."

"That theory won't do," said David Gray, quietly.

"Remember that she was sent for, that Count Orsiera hailed the cab, and that Mr. Tomkins told the man where to drive to."

"But she might have met the other party on the road," urged the detective, rather hopelessly.

"No, it won't do," said David Gray. "You must get some knowledge of the cabman and then follow up the clue."

"That's what you must do," said the count, briskly; "get hold of the cabman and follow him on. I agree with Mr. Gray. You will do nothing unless you find the cabman."

"Or find her," said the detective, significantly.

"Find her—where?" asked Mrs. Murch, with a new terror upon her.

"Well, ma'am, not to hurt your feelings, but to talk in a business-like way, I think she ought to be looked for up and down the river and any place where people are likely to try and hide a body."

"Then you think she is dead, sir?" said Murch, with a despairing look in his eyes.

"I am afraid so."

"And what's she done that she should have her young life took away?"

Murch did not ask the question of the count personally, but he looked at him while speaking, and that gentleman was suddenly afflicted with a cough and turned away. David Gray kept his eyes fixed upon him.

"I suppose there is nothing to be done," said Mr. Cranbury, "but to leave it in the hands of the proper authorities for investigation. You may offer a hundred pounds' reward, which I will be answerable for, and, Murch, you had better go home with your wife and remain with her until this mystery is cleared up or given up as hopeless."

"Thanky, sir," replied Murch, in a broken voice; "we shall need each other now."

Then he and his wife and Ben fled sorrowfully out, and it was noticed by Mr. Cranbury, although he attached no importance to it at the time, that as they passed the count they made

a slight détour, as if they wished to avoid coming in contact with him.

David Gray followed, and the detective remained to consult with the count and Mr. Cranbury, with whom he was closeted for nearly two hours.

CHAPTER XVI.

NO HEART TO GIVE.

The golden beams and lingering glories die,
So fade the hopes that once so brightly shone,
And gentle memory breathes her vespers sigh
O'er dreams of youthful bliss long flown.

JANET'S indisposition departed as quickly as it came, and of its real nature the family doctor, who called in to attend upon her, knew nothing.

But do not let it be for a moment supposed that he admitted his ignorance. If he had done so he would not have been a worthy member of the profession that deals so much in indefinites.

"Our patient," he said, "is young and has had great trouble. Youth is peculiarly sensitive and sometimes yields temporarily, or temporarily in most cases, to the strain. Then the elasticity of early life re-asserts itself and there we are, as it were, on our feet again."

"I suppose that must be it," said Mrs. Cranbury, but Janet only sadly smiled.

"I was not thinking of my trouble then," she said, "and I have extra trouble now. Something has happened to the most devoted maid that ever mistress had. She left her home last night to return here and has not been heard of since."

"She was pretty, I believe?" the doctor said.

"Very pretty."

"Ah! poor, misguided girl. You will hear of her one day."

"You do Peggy a wrong," said Janet, flushing. "If you think that she has been led away. She was a dear, good girl, and engaged to an honest man to be married."

"I am glad to hear that," the doctor replied, "and with pleasure admit that I have misjudged."

But he did not think that he had, and went away convinced that Peggy had been led away. He could conceive of no other fate for a pretty girl who suddenly disappears from home and friends.

The count called in the afternoon and was more than rejoiced to find Janet almost well again. He was, he said, lifted up to the seventh heaven, but he nevertheless looked rather harassed and troubled, and his joy did not appear to be increased by the arrival of Lord Mowbray.

There was a change to be marked in him since he went away. He no longer stood in awe of the count, but looked at him with a cool contempt that was inexplicable to that scheming and mysterious personage.

"I thought you were in Italy," the count remarked.

"I was there in January," replied Lord Mowbray.

"And intended to remain there?"

"As I did not mention my intention to anyone you must have gathered that idea from somebody's fertile imagination, or your own."

Then he turned to Janet, who seemed pleased to see him, and talked to her, leaving the count to kill the time with Mrs. Cranbury.

The original intention to marry Janet, which Count Orsiera spoke of to Euphrosia, had not been carried out, nor had he made any material progress towards that end. He had been assiduous in his attentions, courteous, and as he hoped pleasing, but never once had he received in return a word or look that could possibly be misconstrued into an encouragement to go on.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Cranbury tacitly supported him, for he had gained a hold upon their hearts, but they made no attempt to influence Janet. She was agreeable to the count, but nothing more, and when he was away seldom thought or spoke of him. He was keen enough to read this indifference, and he chafed under it.

Once Mrs. Cranbury said to Janet something

about the future in the sage way that people have when they are on delicate ground.

"When you are married, Janet," she said, "and have a home of your own you will find that you have little time for thinking of anything else."

"But I shall never marry," Janet answered.

"Not marry, Janet? Oh, yes, you will!"

"Never! I could not marry without love, and I have now no heart to give. It lies in the grave with poor Jack."

This was the reason the count never prospered in his suit, and though backed up by Euphrosia, for whom Janet entertained the love that is half founded on fear and half on admiration, he never gained one inch of ground.

Nor was Lord Mowerby really more fortunate or more likely to win her. Janet liked him better than the count, because she knew him better and could talk more freely to him. The time they had spent at Waterview together justified a certain familiarity which the count mistook for a growing love.

Lord Mowerby made a long stay that afternoon, so did the count. Neither would leave until the limit of good breeding had been reached, when both, acting as it might be on a single impulse, rose to leave.

Janet was honoured with a profuse adieu from the count and a quiet, friendly one from Lord Mowerby; then, talking together in the conventional strain of ordinary acquaintanceship, they left the house. When they reached the road their manner changed.

It was a cold March afternoon, with a bitter, blasting wind wavering about, and scarce a pedestrian was to be seen. They were therefore at liberty to indulge in a little frank conversation. The count began it.

"You have returned," he said, "without my permission."

"I have," replied Lord Mowerby, "seeing no occasion to ask for it."

"It is possible you may have a bad memory," rejoined the count, with an ugly glittering in his eyes, "or you may be endowed with the courage of rashness, which is such a distinguishing mark in your countrymen. In either case it is my duty to put you right."

"You think you have the upper hand of me," said Lord Mowerby, "because when I was a mere youth and simply Percy Wharton I allowed myself to be drawn into the net of your secret society."

"Yes, you were drawn there," said the count, smoothly, "and it is a strong net. We have fish of all sizes there, and they cannot escape."

"And you are as much a fish as any of us," said Lord Mowerby.

"I think not. I hold some of the strings of the net."

"Some, but not all, count. Now, listen to me. I HAVE SEEN THE CHIEF!"

The count started and his face changed to a leaden hue. Lord Mowerby, with a smile of triumph on his face, turned away and lit a cigar. This gave the other time to compose himself.

"You have seen the chief," he said.

"Yes," replied Lord Mowerby, "I have. No matter where or by what means our meeting was brought about. But I have seen him, and I have his safeguard. See here."

He drew from his pocket a small leather case, from which he took a small piece of parchment neatly folded. This he handed to the count, who opened it and scanned some hieroglyphics written in what appeared to be red ink.

"You know the signs?" said Lord Mowerby.

"I do," was the reply, uttered softly.

"You do not think they are forged?"

"I am sure they are genuine."

"I took the pains, count, to inform the CHIEF that I had good reason to fear violence from you, and he said that if aught happened to me you and yours should be held responsible for it."

The count did not answer, but his agitation was visibly expressed in his quivering lips and wandering eyes. Lord Mowerby enjoyed his triumph as Englishmen generally do—quietly.

"I will tell you something more," he continued. "You have not even seen the chief,

you do not know him by name or sight, and you have yet two grades to pass through before you reach the post I have attained."

"I don't know by what devilry you have done this," said the count, suddenly losing control of himself, "but I know that you have overreached me, that things have changed about, that you were the slave two months ago and I the master, and that I must now obey you. I yield. I could fight against one man, but not against an unknown number."

"You are wise," said Lord Mowerby, "and I will not be a harder taskmaster than I can help. By the way, this Peggy—what has become of her?"

"She was in my way and I have removed her. As things are now I might have spared myself the expense and trouble."

"It is as well you have done it, count, for she would have been in my way, and I will look upon this act as an anticipation of my wishes. I thank you."

"Let there be no mockery between us," said the count, trembling with passion, "do not thank your slave. Have you any further commands?"

"You must leave here without delay."

"Ah, yes! I will go."

"And not return."

"Am I to leave England?"

"You know you cannot. HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN? No, you must remain. Go and live with— You know who. Perhaps I may visit you ere long."

"Would not that be dangerous?"

"Not if I did so during my HONEYMOON."

"Have you any commands for Euphrosia?"

"Only that she keep out of my way."

"Or Pierre?"

"He may be hanged for all I care."

And then they exchanged bows and parted.

The count walked to Broken Hall, letting himself in at a side gate by means of a latch-key. He avoided the front gate and front door, choosing a back entrance to the house. Ascending the stairs he sought Euphrosia's boudoir, where he found the beauty lounging on a pile of cushions reading.

"Put down your book," he said, with a curtness bordering on rudeness. "I have bad news for you. Wharton, or Lord Mowerby as he is now, has returned. I could have told you of it last night, but I did not care to trouble you with it."

"Then why do you trouble me to-day?" she asked, as she languidly laid aside her book.

"Because he has returned another man. He is our master now."

"Impossible!"

"It is true. By some means he has seen the chief, whom we have never seen, and he knows the man whose very name is strange to us. It is the curse of our society that we all work in the dark."

"We could not work at all unless we did."

"That's true, Euphrosia; but I mean that it would be better for you and me if we knew more of those above us. We only know the converts we make."

"And we know where to ask for instruments when we need them."

"True, but now to pressing business. How long will it take you to get ready?"

"Ready for what?"

"To leave here. It is urgent. We must go."

"Who says so?"

"Mowerby."

"And will you be fooled by—"

"I tell you I have seen his credentials," said the count, impatiently. "We have nothing to do but to obey. Money is short, I know, and if we could have waited another week I might have refilled our coffers, or, as we say now, put something to the balance at our bankers'."

"Must I go? Must I travel through this dreary land such weather as this?" asked Euphrosia, shivering.

"Mowerby says so."

"And does he dare to command me?"

"He dares ANYTHING with us. We must not harm him, but rather watch over his safety, for

if aught happens to him we shall be of the sufferers."

"Why did you not heed me years ago?" asked Euphrosia, passionately, "and keep out of this accursed society?"

"Because I thought you knew nothing," he replied, gloomily, "and I hoped it would give me power. It did so for a time, but it is now my turn to be a slave. But let us be patient. I may distinguish myself and rise above him yet."

"If it must be so I will go. To-morrow I will be ready," Euphrosia said.

"Enough then," he returned. "Pierre and I will be absent for to-night. Light the house up and let there be music until two of the clock let us say."

"It's a dreary, wretched life," said Euphrosia, clasping her hands tightly together. "Is there no lone place we can fly to and live away from it all?"

"There is no such place under the sun," he replied. "We must go on—on, though the end is eternal death."

Broken Hall was lighted from top to bottom that night, and wayfarers as they hurried homeward, with thoughts of fireside comfort in their minds, heard the sound of music within its walls. But they did not linger there to listen.

Mr. Cranbury, when he came back to The Knoll, remarked that the count was entertaining "one of his mysterious parties," which had been held several times during the darker months of winter.

"He has never invited us," said Mrs. Cranbury, quietly.

"That I charge to his delicacy," replied the merchant; "he knows it would be useless. We should not accept."

"But is it not strange," remarked Janet, "that he should never speak of any of his friends? And we never see any of them calling in the daytime?"

"Foreigners have different customs to ours, I imagine," replied Mr. Cranbury, "and most of his friends come a long way. He has told me so."

"No news of poor Peggy?" said Mrs. Cranbury.

"None. I called on Murch at his house and found him in a distracted state. David Gray has taken the matter up. He is keen, and would have made a good private detective."

"What can have become of the poor girl?" said Janet, with fresh tears in her eyes.

She had been shedding them at intervals during the day.

"I have heard something from Murch," said Mr. Cranbury, hesitating, "which of course can have no bearing on her disappearance, and I do not think I need tell you—"

"But you ought," said Mrs. Cranbury. "It might be a clue."

"It seems that Murch and his daughter have been putting their heads together about poor Jack, and they settled that somebody—no matter whom—"

"But it does matter. Tell me all," insisted Mrs. Cranbury.

"Well, then, they suspected Lord Mowerby, and Peggy undertook to watch him. This she did, as far as our house is concerned."

"How absurd!" exclaimed Janet. "What could he have to do with poor Jack's murder?"

"Just so," said Mr. Cranbury, hopelessly, "and so I told Murch. But he was obstinate; and he went so far as to speak ill of the count, and Peggy's sweetheart was just as obstinate. Of course we must overlook it, for when people suffer a loss such as we know something of they are apt to get morbid ideas and to be suspicious of innocent people."

"But they must have some grounds for it."

"Very little; but it seems that Tomkins followed Lord Mowerby one night when he left here—he was Percy Wharton then, I believe—and saw him get into a carriage waiting somewhere down by the common. The count, then a stranger to Tomkins, was in that carriage."

"And is that all?"

"Yes. And really there is nothing in such a meeting. Young men are fond of seeing what

they call life, and I daresay they went off to some place of amusement, or it might be to a gambling saloon. There is really nothing in it."

"Absolutely nothing," said Mrs. Cranbury. And Janet said so too.

"But what troubles me," pursued the merchant, "is that Murch and this Tomkins threaten to be troublesome. They say they will accuse the count and Lord Mowerby to their faces of having a hand in the disappearance of both our Jack and Peggy. That would be an outrage I should feel justified in punishing."

"How?" asked Janet.

"By discharging Murch and advising our friends to place themselves under the protection of the law," said Mr. Cranbury, severely; "but I hope what I have said to-night will bring them to reason."

"Let us hope so."

All that the law could do to ascertain the fate of Peggy was being done, but the success was nil. The morning brought no letters to The Knoll from those engaged in the search, and the mystery of the girl's disappearance each hour grew deeper.

At nine o'clock the merchant started for the City, and on arriving there found Murch, haggard and worn, and looking like a man who had been travelling all the night, standing by the door.

"This is not well, Murch," he said. "You are killing yourself."

"I shall kill myself or somebody, sir, afore long," replied Murch. "I want to speak to you, sir—particular."

"I must look through my letters first," said Mr. Cranbury.

"Very good, sir. It's for me to wait if you wishes it; but I've got something that ought to be told soon."

"I'll not keep you waiting more than a quarter of an hour."

Mr. Cranbury went into the office, and Murch walked up and down outside, while the counting-house morning routine was gone through within. The batch of letters was heavier than usual, and all had to be opened, read, sorted out, marked with instructions, or verbally commented on. It was nearer half an hour than a quarter when Murch was eventually invited in.

"I'd not have come, sir, if I hadn't something really to tell," he said, "and I know you will be angry with me—but don't stop me, sir. Let me have my say. It's about the count."

"Go on," said the merchant, compressing his lips.

"Last night, sir, after you left my house me and Ben Tomkins walked down to Clapham, and we set about watching Brocken Hall."

"That was folly. What good could it do you?"

"The place was lighted up from top to bottom, and there was music there, and it ought to have been full of company."

"It was full of company, undoubtedly."

"Master," said Murch, holding up his two arms in his excitement, "it wasn't. There was ne'er a soul there to speak of. Only one shadow crossed the blinds and that was a woman's. We were right into the grounds and could see clearly."

"The lights are high and might not have cast their shadows."

"Master, there were none to cast. Me and Ben waited until two o'clock, and ne'er a carriage left or a soul went away on foot. There wasn't a sound of voice, and nothing but music, which was such as we never heard afore. It wasn't earthly—"

"All your fancy, Murch. The guests may have stayed. The night was very rough."

"The count himself wasn't there, master, for about three o'clock—we stuck there until then, sir—he come home with another fellow, both looking wore out, and they were both in a bad humour, and said hard things to each other as they crossed the grounds. Says the count: 'It was your stupidity that spoilt the job.' And the other says: 'It might have been done neat if you hadn't been so nervous.' And they tapped with their fingers on the door, and a woman with a thick shawl over her head came down

and let 'em in. Directly after that all the lights were put out, and we came away."

"Murch!" said the merchant, firmly, "this sort of thing must be put an end to. You must not make these vague accusations against my friends behind their backs."

"But I'll make 'em afore their faces," replied Murch.

"Will you go down with me to Brocken Hall and repeat what you have said here?"

"Ay, that I will, sir."

"Then," said Mr. Cranbury, as he closed and locked his desk, "we will go at once, and do not blame me if you get into trouble. I shall not stand between you and the anger of the count."

"I don't want anybody to stand between, sir," said Murch, "not wishing to be rude, but only speaking as I feel, and I'm not afraid of the count or anyone else. Truth is truth, and I stands by though it hangs me."

(To be Continued.)

FACETIÆ.

GAMBETTA's latest move will probably be known as "Gambetta's Gambit," i.e., sacrificing something to gain everything. *Nous verrons.* Punch.

"THE QUEEN'S ENGLISH" (OR SCOTCH).

MINISTER: "Weel, John, an hoo did ye like ma son's discomfise?"

JOHN: "Weel, meenister, ah maun admeest he's vera soond, but, oh, man! he's no deap! His pronounciation's no vera gweed; but an' ve nae doobt he'll impruv'!" Punch.

OMITTED IN GRAMMARS.—Liquid letters, "B and S." Punch.

"COLOUR-HEARING."

A CORRESPONDENT writes to ask us whether the following question has anything to do with this interesting scientific theory, viz., "Are the Blue Books intended to be red?" [We don't know; ask Brown.—Ed.] Punch.

A BURNING QUESTION.—The London water companies' difficulty. Wanted, a new plan to set the Thames on fire. Punch.

INNOCENT ENJOYMENT.

CITIZEN: "'Did a good stroke o' bithneth yetherday, Mo! The I treated the mithith to the moothic-hall latht night—sthood her a bottle o' theedone, and sne thought it was champagne!—'took it down beautiful!" Punch.

LOCAL TAXATION.—A poll-tax. Punch.

X 0909: "If ever I did see such a young stupid! What's your father, boy?"

THE SWEET INNOCENT: "A policeman, sir." Moonshine.

THE bells and beau of the City.—"Great Paul" and Bow Church. Moonshine.

A LOCK-SMITH.—The Governor of Newgate. Moonshine.

Was it love that made the bull's-sigh, and do people lose much at Hartle-pool? Moonshine.

THE PARADISE OF SLAVERY.—Slaves to fashion. Moonshine.

THE lost and tired pedestrian to the fog.—"Give me a lift." Moonshine.

RELICS OF BURNS.—Scars. Moonshine.

OUR NEGRO POPULATION.—The blacks of London. Moonshine.

PARADOXICAL.

A CORRESPONDENT writes:—It is a strange fact that although as a rule running about increases the circulation and consequent temperature of bodies, even in the hottest weather, the faster an engine runs the more coal'd it is! This correspondent is evidently bent upon engine himself at our expense. Judy.

SPRINGTIDE MEDITATIONS.

(Occasioned by the mildness of the season.)

You may, probably, not have heard a rook swear, and yet you may have seen a cross-cuss?

The snowdrop is the flower of the present; but what is the flower of the fuschia?

The prim-rose does not affect the dandy. lion.

The rose is England's flower. It is too true. Many of us are hard roes; more of us soft roes; in fact, are we not all herring mortals?

"Would you marry gold?" he cried. "Certainly not," said she; "I want heart's ease."

The aconite is the earliest flowering of all spring plants. Its end is death, however.

Covent Garden spring bouquets speak for themselves. Yet the language of flowers in the adjacent Bow Street Police Court is more to the purpose. Moonshine.

WHAT is the difference between the Chinaman who has lately made himself notorious and the last glance at one's native shores?—One is an erring Ling Look, and the other is a lingering look. Moonshine.

WHEN a gentleman pops the question and receives no answer it is an understood thing that "silence gives consent." Supposing, however, that the lady smiled, could he consider that "s(m)ilence gives consent?" Moonshine.

CHAMBER MUSIC.—Nursery airs. Moonshine.

THE PLACE FOR TERMAGANTS.—Shrewsbury. Moonshine.

MORE QUEER QUERIES.

(By Our Own Queer One.)

DID you ever see a "trivet" when it was "right"?

Do opera singers measure their time with the compass of the voice or with the scales?

Should you say that a sea captain had "got 'em on" when he wears his ship?

Does a standing joke ever require a seat?

Would it be quite in accordance with the eternal fitness of things to describe a baby as "roar material"?

Supposing you wanted to stop the mouth of a river would you do it with a lock and quay (key)?

Did you ever know anyone who ever did see a bedpost in the act of "twinkling"?

When your friends drink your health, i.e., "toast you," does it necessarily follow that you will be "done brown"? Judy.

COMMERCIAL VOCALISM.

ONE who ought to be a good amateur singer—an in-voice clerk. Funny Folks.

AN ÆSTHETIC TASK.—Extracting sunbeams from sunflowers. Judy.

A RELATIVE MINOR.—Your son before he comes of age. Judy.

PAWNING EXTRAORDINARY.—Popping the question. Judy.

WHY is a kiss on board a river steamer a relish for breakfast?—Because it's a water-o'ress. Judy.

FLIGHTY.—The intended balloon trip of Colonel Brine across the briny ocean at this sea(son!). Judy.

WHEN does a person who is partial to a South of France watering-place make a good uncle?—When he loves his Nice. Judy.

A MILITARY AUTHORITY UNLIKELY TO DO THINGS BY HALVES.—A "quarter"-master. Fun.

NOT A BAD JUDD-GE.

THERE is coal under London, Professor Judd informs us. The news is startling, and the price of Wallend should at once go down. Some people will shake their heads and say that the coal may be there, but how are we to get it? Well, that is quite a miner consideration. Funny Folks.

SPECTACULAR.

"SPECTACLES," says a recent article on optical instruments, "have, like everything else, moved with the times." Of course they have. Who has not heard of "moving spectacles"?

Funny Folks.

MEN OF RANK AND STATION.—Railway cabmen.

Funny Folks.

A "RISE" IN COAL.

The scientists state that "fifty tons of coal may hang in fog over London on a single day." This explains the fact that, with the approach of the metropolitan winter, there always comes an announcement that "coals have gone up."

Funny Folks.

WITH VERSUS WITH.

(See Divorce Court Reports.)

With was with With; but now, beyond a doubt,

Parted from With, each With will be without.

Funny Folks.

INCONSTANT.

M. DE LESSEPS is very favourably inclined towards the Isthmuses of Corinth and Panama, at present, but he intends soon to "cut" them both.

Funny Folks.

A REGULAR LOAFER.—The baker that calls every day.

Funny Folks.

BELLA'S HERO:

A STORY OF

THE WELSH MARCHES.

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT THEY DID WITH OUR HERO.

As nearly as our hero could judge, it was between three and four o'clock in the morning when he was put into the carriage, with one of his captors on the back seat, by his side, while the other sat in front, with the reins. Until they had got beyond the confines of the village the sack was kept over his head, but at that point the man by his side said to him:

"Look 'e, my man: We don't want to put you to one bit of unnecessary pain or trouble; but there are a few things as 'ave got to be done. For instance: you've got to go with us, and you won't make no fuss—'cause, d'ye see?—we won't have it. Now—if I take this sack off your head, will ye keep quiet? Will ye hold yer tongue still?"

Conway had thought of all this, and had made up his mind. He had resolved upon the cause of his abduction and also upon the course he would pursue. With regard to the first proposition—why he had been thus captured—there could be but one solution: He was in Fitz Eustace's way.

And he now knew who Colonel Fitz Eustace was—knew as well as though the man had borne his true name and character stamped upon his brow. The man had a daring game on his hands—a game equal to that of life and death in importance—and he, Conway, might ruin it by a breath.

But, with him out of the way, there would be none to make him afraid. And this was to accomplish that end, to remove him until the game could be played and won!

And under this head there was one other consideration: Fitz Eustace could have no object in doing him harm; but rather his interest would lie in the opposite direction. He thought he knew the man well enough to know that when his game should have been boldly played, and skillfully won, he would not shrink from facing those whom he had duped. Though here the youth may have made a slight mistake. He did not fully realise the stupendous effrontery with which the man was operating, nor how rapidly, madly, and recklessly, he was verging toward the lordship of Mendon. Once

with the coronet on his brow, would he be in a hurry to set free the man who could hurl him from the throne? Conway did not think of that.

However, he thought of much, and in the end he had resolved as we have seen. Thus upon the first proposition. Second, how should he conduct himself? Putting his wrath aside, and admitting only cool common sense to his counsel, he quickly determined to invite no rudeness and no ill treatment.

He was entirely overmatched; his captors were armed, and would kill him without a qualm should he give them occasion. He had overheard enough between the man who was driving and him who had not accompanied them—Fitz Eustace himself he knew—to assure him that he was to be held, dead or alive! So he would exercise his judgment, keep his eyes and ears open, watch every event, and look for his opportunity.

With his mind thus made up he replied to his interlocutor, who was holding the coarse sack away from his mouth, so that he might speak:

"Give me light and air and I will take no advantage, I give you my word."

The man very shortly thereafter lifted the sack away and placed upon the captive's head a warm cap.

"Now," said George, after a little pause, during which he drank in the fresh air gratefully, "why will you not remove the bonds from my arms? I will give you the same promise."

"Not just yet. Wait a while."

"But the cord pains me. Why should you put me to a needless torture? I pledge you my word that I will take no advantage of it."

"What d'ye say, Dick?" to the man who was driving, who made answer:

"As you like, Tom. I think the boy means fair. At all events, it would be the worse for him if he should go cuttin' up."

"Well," said Tom, after a little consideration, "I'll give you a trial. But, mind, if you give us trouble, look out!"

"I will keep my word."

"I'm blamed if I don't believe you mean it!"

And with this emphatic avowal of confidence in his captive, the man called Tom took him by the shoulder and faced him around, and then cast off the lashing from the arms.

"Oh!" cried the victim, when he found his limbs free and himself at ease, "I should be a fool indeed to jeopardise such a privilege!"

"So you would."

And that closed the conversation.

The night was comparatively clear, and not very cold. George was comfortably warm in his swathing of bed-clothing, though it was far from a comfortable garb to wear; but he would not speak of it at present. For their own sakes, to avoid observation, his captors would offer him his proper clothing when the day had broken, as he knew they had brought his clothing with them.

The horses were ordinary animals, and went over the road at a moderate pace. They had spirit enough, and were apparently willing, but they moved like beasts that had been overworked of late, and the driver did not urge them. Thus far speed had not seemed to be an aim.

As the day was breaking they pulled up beside a wayside cottage, wherein early risers had already built a fire. The man called Dick dropped his reins and alighted, and went to the door of the cot and knocked. A man answered the summons, whom Dick followed into the entry, where a consultation was held. By-and-bye he returned, and having nodded in a peculiar manner to his comrade, he opened the carriage door, whereupon Tom turned to the captive and said:

"Here, my good man, you shall have the privilege of changing your present rig for your own clothes. We shall let you go into that cottage, and give you all the favours you can expect us to grant. If you break over the rule, the worse for you. How you behave here may show us how to take you in the time to come."

The man did not wait for an answer, but got out from the carriage, and then turned and extended his hand. George alighted, and entered the dwelling between the two, where he found a fire burning in a broad, stone fire-place, with a kettle hissing on the crane.

His clothes were spread out, the garments he had taken off on retiring, with several others, and having selected such as he would then put on, one of the men rolled the others up and tied them into a bundle, while his comrade helped George to dress.

While this was going on the man of the house came in with a loaf of bread and a piece of cold roast mutton. He looked at the man who was dressing, and as he did so George raised his eyes. As the cotter met the glance he started back like a man frightened, and on the instant a gleam of light broke in upon our hero's mind. The look of the honest peasant, a frightened and yet a pitying look, told its own story.

The poor fellow took him for a maniac! That was the secret of his captors' plan of operation. That was the plea they would offer to such as might require to be enlightened. He was a madman, whom these keepers were carrying to a place of safety.

We will not attempt to follow the youth in his reflections upon this discovery. But what could he do? At present nothing. He was as completely in their power as though he were locked within a prison cell. He could only wait and watch his opportunity. It might come. It would come. He could not doubt it.

The cotter, when he found that the young man was perfectly calm and docile, brought from a closet a black jug and three earthen mugs, then he brought a large bowl and sugar; and then he proceeded to brew a bowl of hot rum toddy, and to cut the bread into slices, and also to slice the meat.

George asked if he could have a cup of milk, which was very soon brought, after which he made a comfortable meal, consenting to take a swallow of the toddy before they left.

In his proper clothing our hero rode more comfortably; and late in the forenoon they approached a large town, which he judged, from the direction they had come, and the distance covered, must be Bridgenorth, distant from Mendon about forty miles.

At the outskirts of this town the horses were pulled up and the two men looked upon their captive. George had studied them critically and had read their characters.

They were both of them powerfully built men, muscular and vigorous, and desperate. They were men that no one would wish to offend, unless he was prepared to fight a strong fighting man; nor would any wish to trifle with them. They were comparatively young, not over five-and-thirty, and the man Tom did not seem quite so old as that.

Evidently they were professional rogues and desperadoes, living by their wits and upon plunder.

Tom made the speech to their listener on the present occasion, and suffice it for us to say that, when Conway had heard, he promised in good faith that he would go to an inn and make no effort to attract attention. And, finally, he promised that he would not, while there, attempt to escape.

An inn was found, and the captive was conducted directly to the rear upper chamber, where one of the captors remained with him, while the other went for refreshments.

Our hero had read much of the doings of insane asylums in England—those maintained by private individuals, ostensibly for the purpose of affording wealthy families an opportunity to have unfortunate relatives, insane, confined and treated without public exposure; but, really and truly, in many cases the places were used for the infamous purpose of putting out of the way innocent people, whose only fault was that their presence stood between the plotter and some material benefit desired.

Ay, he knew that hundreds of poor unfortunate had been shut up in that way, some of them kept for months, some for years, and some for life!

And George pictured to himself the scene that would inevitably result should he now attempt to escape by making an outcry, or even by claiming the ear of a passer. All would shrink from him, afraid of a maniac.

All think it is the first instinct of a crazy man, either crazy with rum or from other cause, to believe himself sober and sensible and all the world his enemies. That was one of the horrors of the system.

The moment the marked victim had been seized upon and declared insane his every effort to escape was sure to be taken by strangers as a wonderful proof of his mania!

Conway knew, and resolved accordingly. He discovered a few things that surprised him, the most important of which to himself was that wherever his captors stopped the host seemed to be in league with them. At all events it was so at Bridgenorth; and it was to be the same at other places. The landlords were evidently members of the brotherhood—and the brotherhood was an iniquitous one!

The party remained at the inn of Bridgenorth until the middle of the afternoon, when they hatched up and proceeded fifteen miles farther, to the small town of Wilmot. Here an inn was found where Tom and Dick both seemed to be at home, and a chamber in which their charge could be safely lodged.

And here they remained until after dark, and when our hero was conducted downstairs and out into the court of the inn, he found himself led to a strange vehicle, with strange horses attached; and his captors had made a complete and startling change in their costumes and personal appearance.

He believed this was meant to throw pursuers off the track; and he became further convinced when, on setting forth, they took the way to the northward, along a narrow woodland path, and, anon, turned sharply to the left, into a rugged, unused byway, moving swiftly on to the westward—going thus towards the point from which they had come.

On—on—on through the long night on that same westerly course, showing that the passage to Wilmot had been but a blind.

On through that night, then a rest in an out-of-the-way place, the keeper of which was a born villain; then on again—and on—two more days and two more nights; and during all this time the captive had not discovered an opportunity of escape, not one.

The watch upon him had been vigilant, and there had been no moment in the which there had not been a double charge of powder and a brace of bullets ready to be discharged on the instant when he should start to give his keepers the slip.

They had entered Wales, and had travelled two days therein; and Conway knew, by the feeling of the westerly wind, that they were not far from the sea-coast.

It was towards the close of the fifth day from Mendon that they approached a considerable town in the midst of the rugged mountains of Merionethshire.

But they did not enter the village. In a deep glen surrounded by dense forest was a large building, of grey stone, within a high encompassing wall, the small windows of which Conway could see, as they approached, were guarded by iron bars.

And to the gate of this structure they drove. As they drew up a man came out through a wicket, to whom Master Dick addressed a few words apparently in Welsh, which the captive could not understand; but their purport was apparent in the result which immediately followed, the opening of the ponderous gates and the passage of the new-comers into the court beyond.

Once in that building what should be his fate? Conway asked himself. His heart throbbed and his brain reeled. So for a moment, and then he became firm and strong. The thought came to him that he might leap from the carriage and dart out through the open gateway.

He calculated the chances and saw his only

opportunity. The sight of the gloomy prison-house was terrible. Within those massive walls who of his friends could ever find him?—or how could he ever escape? He must venture the trial, let it end as it might.

These thoughts were passing while the carriage was entering the court, and before it had come to a stand. The man Tom sat upon his left hand, and upon his right was the carriage door, locked.

But the covering of the upper half of the door was only painted canvas, and he believed he could break through that and plunge forth into the open air without.

The moment came; Tom had reached forward to speak with his comrade upon the front seat, and his attention was distracted. The captive measured the height of the canvas and the distance to the ground, and just as the driver drew in his reins he made the leap!

He leaped up, plunged his head and shoulders against the canvas, burst it through as though it had been paper, and in a moment more he was upon the solid earth. But he came down on his hands and knees, and before he could get up the man who had opened the gate was upon him.

Conway threw him off instantly and arose—arose to go down again beneath the weight of Dick Ladybird, the driver, who, being free on his seat, with nothing in his way, had leaped the moment he had detected the captive's purpose.

"Now hold on!" Dick cried. "It's no use. Ye can't do it!"

"Easy!" put in Tom, who had come upon the scene. And then, into the youth's ear, he whispered:

"Look ye, my boy. Don't make it worse'n we would have it. What did ye do it for? Bless yer soul, twa'n't o' use. Now see. If ye'll behave yerself after this, this sha'n't count. Conway, ye've got to pull up in this place, and ther' ain't no help for it. Now get up and go along with us. We'll have the doctor and his keepers treat ye well if ye'll let 'em. Will ye do it?"

The youth's heart sank, and the impulse was strong upon him to put forth his candid opinion of the whole business. But what use, what good could result? He had better, by far, secure the best treatment possible.

And again he surrendered.

Then his captors permitted him to get up, after which they led him across the paved court to a small office-like porch that stood out from the main building near to the principal entrance, the windows of which was barred, and the door heavily studded with wrought nail-heads.

Within this office was found a middle-aged man, of large frame, coarse and ugly looking, wearing a grey wig and a pair of large green goggles.

His garb was of soiled and frayed brown cotton velvet, cut after a professional pattern, while the linen, in sight upon his bosom and at his wrists, was almost filthy. He answered to the simple appellation—"Doctor."

"Ah-a-a-ah!" this individual rolled forth, in a sort of guttural growl, in answer to the salutation of Tom Monkton, on this iniquitous mission. "So you've arrived. And your patient is safe. I hope you have not exasperated him. A flashing eye! Ah! and the lips quiver! Bad signs! Bad signs! Blood evidently hot, and pulse—how is his pulse?"

And the brute came around from behind his desk and approached his patient and reached for his wrist.

Tom Monkton caught the flash of Conway's keen blue eye, and saw the quiver of the distended nostril, and touching him lightly on the arm he had time to whisper "Beware!" when the brutal-looking genius of the den had put forth his hard, dirty hand.

The youth conquered himself and allowed the man to take his wrist.

"Oh—oh—well, well, pulse not so very bad, after all; but hard, and strong—very strong! Showing plainly undue action of the heart."

"Be under no apprehensions, doctor. We can avouch for his good behaviour."

"Umph! Yes, we had a specimen of it at the gate!"

"That was an attempt to escape," said Tom, quickly and emphatically, "which any human being might have made. He would have been less than human if, seeing an opportunity in such a strait, he had not made it. However, we wish to turn him over to your care, and we shall look for prompt reports."

The doctor reflected a moment, and then beckoned for Tom to follow him out into a rear apartment, where they were absent several minutes.

At length the doctor came back, accompanied by two powerful assistants, and informed Dick that his friend wished to see him, at the same time pointing over his shoulder with his thumb.

Dick Ladybird turned to his late captive, and seemed upon the point of speaking, but he did not. He looked for a moment into his handsome face, and then turned away and went out into the rear apartment, whither his companion had gone before him, and Conway saw neither of them any more.

As the door closed behind the departing abductor the doctor made a sign to his two bull-headed helpers, whereupon they advanced to the youthful patient took him, one by each arm, and led him out by the way he had entered, led him to the main entrance of the asylum, into a gloomy, vaulted hall, through that to a pass that led to a rear wing, thence up a flight of stone steps, to a narrow, vaulted passage, on either side of which, at various distances, were massive doors of oaken plank, set in walls of solid masonry.

At the far end of this passage a door was opened, and the patient was guided through into the room beyond.

He took in the situation at a glance: A small room, with a floor of tiles; walls of brick, thoroughly whitewashed; a low, dingy ceiling; two small, square windows, guarded by heavy iron bars; an iron bed-frame, with scant bedding thereon, a mattress and two poor grey blankets; a small pine table, and two chairs.

This the youth had taken in, when the heavy door, of double plank, was closed upon him; the strong bolts upon the outside shot into place with a dull thud, and he was alone with his own reflections.

CHAPTER XVI.

STARTLING INTELLIGENCE—NEAR TO THE END.

NEARLY two weeks had passed since the funeral of the late marquis, and during that time the new Lord of the Marches had mostly kept his own apartments. But at length, as the second week was drawing to a close, he admitted Fitz Eustace to an audience in his library.

"My dear lord," cried the colonel, on entering, with both hands extended, "I have come to see you, and have come with a determination. If you say so, if you order it so to be, I will take myself away from your castle. And, my dear fellow, I shall not blame you, I shall not feel hard or hurt. I know how you must feel, with this intelligence from the Indian Ocean! But, Roderic, my lord, I hope it may not be so. We know the ship must be lost, but let us try to hope that Arthur was not on board."

The marquis shook his head mournfully. He had no hope. It seemed to him as though fate was hemming him in with calamity on all hands.

Fitz Eustace responded with a shake of the head more hopeful, and ventured to take a seat so near to his lordship as to be able to touch him with his hand.

At all events, my dear lord, you will try to look at your own future through a brighter medium. Come, come, cheer up. If you would be happier with me away, say so. Just say so, and you shall see how quickly I will go."

Poor Roderic! He felt it, in the depths of his inner consciousness, that the man was a hypocrite, if not an unadulterated villain, but, for the life of him, he could not turn him away in such a fashion.

What harm, he asked himself, could he do at the Castle while George Conway was absent? Might he not be more surely overlooked where he now was than in another place?

And, further, friends were at work in the search for the missing youth; and while they searched it would be better that he who was suspected of being deep in the plot for Conway's abduction, ay, of being its instigator, it would be better that he should be held near at hand where he could be found at any moment.

Thus far Mendon was sure that Fitz Eustace was in ignorance of the work that was being done towards the finding of Conway. He knew that somebody was searching, but he did not know how nearly they were upon the true track. In short, he knew not how closely he himself was watched.

These thoughts passed rapidly through Roderic's mind, with one other: He knew that Sir Peter had promised to Fitz Eustace the hand of his younger and fairer daughter, and he knew, too, that the baronet had been moved to this promise through the firm belief that the prospective son-in-law was very sure to be Marquis of Mendon.

It came upon him, thus thinking, that he might as well play a part as to leave the game wholly in the hands of the other, for though his feelings were touched, and though he would not, under any circumstances, have sent the man away, yet he was persuaded that he was assuming a part for effect. Yes, he would play a part too. At least, he would hide his real sentiments.

"Fitz Eustace, you are beside yourself. Why should I want you to go? If you are as you claim, and as I do not dispute, next of kin after my brother and myself, I should be doing an injustice to set you adrift. I will not deny that I have avoided you. So I have everybody, save those with whom I had business. No, no, go to your room, go where you please, make yourself at home. I can only ask you to let me be by myself. That is my mood. You certainly have enough on your hands to occupy your time and attention, so my society can well be spared."

"I will spare you, my dear cousin. I know your heart, and I know what you have to endure, both mentally and physically. However, I will not trespass further at this time. I thank you for your kindness, and pray that God may bless you! An revoir!"

And with this the colonel bowed and left the apartment.

"By the host!" he muttered, as he walked away alone, "I wish I knew how much he suspects. Evidently he suspects something, though I do not fancy he is in the right direction. Conway must have said something before we got him off."

Here he stopped and smote his hands together, as though his thoughts had taken a new course.

"And how much does this young Conway know, I wonder? He can know nothing of himself. What he knows he must have gained from Lord Allerton. Allerton knew, I am very sure; but this fellow never knew. I doubt if he ever saw a Fitz Eustace in India. Bah! Let them bring him back, and I will dispute him to his face, and give him the lie. But he will not come back until I am in the lordly robes!"

And with this he passed on, and that evening he spent at Waldron Hall. He saw Bella at the dinner table, and waited upon her into the drawing-room after dinner. But he did not worry her.

He had come to a wise resolution in that respect. He had determined to let the girl have her own way, in every respect, until the hour for the performance of the marriage ceremony should have arrived; at which time the baronet had promised him Bella's hand should be his in spite of all the opposition of all the world.

And this had been told to Bella. Her father had told her, and once, when she had pushed him hard, the suitor himself had told her; so she was not ignorant of the plan by which it was proposed to dispose of her hand.

It was on the day following the interview just recorded that a horseman rode into the court of the Castle and called for an ostler.

Old Mark Dowler heard the call, and was just in season to see the man dismount—a large, full-faced, red-headed man, with an enormous pair of bushy red whiskers—and to hear him ask for Colonel Fitz Eustace.

Jerry Trimble was quickly on the scene, and having sent the stranger's horse to the stable by one of the men, he led the man himself into the keep and up to his master's apartment.

Mercy! what had possessed the old steward? For a little time he was like one out of his head. But, presently, he became self-contained, smote his hands together with a tremendous oath, and then reached for his old, rusty keys and started for the subterranean crypts.

Meantime, the stranger of the red head and the red whiskers had followed Master Trimble to the apartment of the colonel, where as soon as the door had been closed behind him, he removed his heavy wig and his cumbersome false beard, whereupon Fitz Eustace caught his hand, exclaiming:

"Ha! my dear old Tom!—Doctor Pownal!—ha! ha!—how do you do? 'Pon my soul it does me good to set eyes on you!"

Yes, it was Tom Monkton, returned from his mission into Wales, come to report his success; and when he had told his story—had told how he had been followed as far as Wilton and how he had there turned back, while the pursuers had kept on almost to London, and how he had got his charge away among the mountains—when he had told it all Fitz Eustace clapped his hands in ecstasy, he was safe.

Once—twice—he thought he heard someone at the door, something had sounded like a low, smothered cough of a man hoarse and frightened. But nothing was found. Only imagination, that was all. And the colonel went on with his questions, which the other answered.

It was near the middle of the forenoon that the red-headed, frowy-whiskered man had arrived to see Colonel Fitz Eustace. Two hours before that time Robert Bowman and Mr. Philip Munn had entered the office of Abram Lawrence, at Bishop's Castle, worn and weary and sick at heart. Philip Munn was the detective whom the old attorney had employed to search for young Conway.

"Well," said the aged man of law, looking up and pushing away his writing, "you don't look like a successful pair, I must confess!"

"No, we went on a fool's errand," said Munn. "We went to Lanvilling, and it was time thrown away; this youngster was for pushing on, but I couldn't see the use."

"Where would you have pushed to, Robert?" the lawyer asked.

"Well, sir, I can't say, exactly; but I wanted to go on farther. I believed we were on the road. I didn't like the looks of the landlord at Lanvilling. I firmly believe he is in league with the rogues. And that one thing led me to think the rascals might have gone that way."

The detective was upon the point of speaking when the three were startled by the thundering of a horse's hoofs upon the pavement beneath the windows, and, presently, the sound of somebody in the entry of the office.

A moment more and old Mark Dowler, steward of Mendon, entered in a state of wondrous excitement. He gave a look at the lawyer to be sure that he was present, and then sank into a chair and took breath.

"Mark! what is it? What news do you bring? Upon my life, I believe you have come in the nick of time! Is it of George Conway?"

"Yes, sir. Oh, yes!" So he spoke, quivering, and then, with a smiting of his heavy hand upon his knee, he exclaimed:

"Oh! what did he put me under such an oath for? But I can tell you now, for I've heard it all afresh. Yes, sir, I've just heard. Oh! such a precious mess! A man rode up to the Castle, a red-headed man, with a pair of great red whiskers, and wanted to see Colonel Fitz Eustace. I heard his voice, and it startled

me. I knew I'd heard it before. So I contrived, never mind how, but I contrived to do a little eavesdropping on my own account, and I overheard this man's report to Colonel Fitz Eustace—"

"That man!" broke in Robert Bowman. "We saw him the other side of the border."

Philip Munn nodded assent.

"But," returned Mark, "I expect you didn't see him with his red wig and big red whiskers off."

The detective started and pricked up his ears.

"Ah!" pursued the old steward, now that he had regained his breath, "I saw him take off his wig and whiskers, and then I beheld the very man as had been there before and had called himself Doctor Adam Pownal; and now the colonel called him Tom."

"Tom!" repeated Munn, with a great start. "What else?"

"That was all I heard."

"What does he look like?"

"A smooth-faced, black-eyed, wicked-looking chap, not more'n thirty; hair black and cut close; and about as ugly a looking customer for the law and the law as one would care to meet."

Philip Munn groaned aloud.

"Tom Monkton! for the world!" he exclaimed. "If it is him, there must be more of 'em. But go on."

"You'll thank your stars when you've heard. This man, it seems, had been one of a pair of 'em, and the other they spoke of as Dick—"

"Oh! Dick Ladybird!" gasped the detective, in torture of suspense and eager desire. "And I have been on their very track and did not know it. But go on."

"Well, as I was saying, this man was one of the two as had been to carry away George Conway; and I heard him tell—and laugh loud and long as he told—how he started off to the east'rd, as far as Wilton, and threw his pursuers off the track; and then they turned about and went into Wales; and, sir, George Conway is now, at this moment, in one of them horrible private mad-houses, called Insane Asylums!—under the shadow of Arran Fowdy Mountain! I heard the town of Tinfreth mentioned, and I am sure it is not far away from the mad-house. Yes, sir; there he is. And there they think to hold him. He is locked up beyond the power of mortal man to break out, and the man that keeps the place is bound to serve Fitz Eustace. Isn't that something to know?"

Abram Lawrence was upon his feet, and for a little time he was forced to pace to and fro to quiet his nerves and gather up his scattered senses. He knew the place of which Mark had told.

It was within the township of Tinfreth, just over the border of Montgomeryshire, in Merionethshire.

"I know the iniquitous establishment!" he at length exclaimed. "A year ago, or little more, I commenced an action against the keeper of the place for abduction and illegal restraint; but we could not find the responsible keeper. However, we set our man free, and we will this one! Oh! Munn! Munn!—now your work is laid out for you. We will go to our sheriff, and get all the help you need. And you can stop at Lanvilling and enlist officers there. I will give you a letter to my old friend, Justice Llanfynn, and he will place at your service as many men as you want. I will not instruct you further, only to warn you to bring George Conway to this place, and to do it secretly. I think you will have no further trouble."

"I may go?" cried Robert, eagerly.

"Of course you may," answered Lawrence.

And then Mr. Munn turned to the youth and took his hand.

"Robert! from the bottom of my heart I crave your pardon. You were right and I was wrong. There, that will do. I mean what I say."

"Bless you, sir. If you did make one mistake, you have taught me things that I never knew, and opened my eyes to things that would have been dark but for your help. Ha! we have a glorious prospect open before us now."



["SO YOU'VE ARRIVED. AND YOUR PATIENT IS SAFE."]

Half an hour more was spent in overhauling old Mark's budget of information, after which he was dismissed with a caution to conceal his visit from Colonel Fitz Eustace, which he promised to do. He would have done it, however, of his own accord.

And, in one hour more, Philip Munn and Robert Bowman, with two officers of the force of Bishop's Castle in company, mounted on powerful horses, were far on their way towards Wales.

They had a ride of between fifty and sixty miles to their destination, and they meant to reach it on the morrow.

The day, so exciting and so momentous to certain of our friends, closed gloomily upon the young Lord of Mendon.

Before dark he had felt the old pain at the pit of his stomach increasing, and after an hour's suffering, during which he had sent for Dr. Tobey, the pain gradually died away, leaving behind a feeling which he had never before experienced.

It was a sensation of sinking, a sort of faintness, as though all life and energy had departed. He had become listless and careless, with a disposition to close his eyes and doze.

In this condition was he when the doctor arrived. It was now dark, and the lamps had been lighted.

The doctor turned the marquis's face to the light and looked at the eyes. And then he felt the pulse and then he looked gloomy and sad:

"My lord, there is to be nothing sudden, I am very sure. Yet— You would have the truth?"

"Don't ask me that, doctor. You should know me by this time."

"Well, my lord, you are failing—breaking up! The end is not far off!"

"I feel it, doctor. But how long can I live?"

"You will live through the night; and if you can keep the cordial I will give you on your

stomach you may hold out two or three days. All will depend upon that."

"Upon my soul, dear doctor, I feel as though a drop of cordial would do me good now. Let us try it."

Tobey's eyes brightened. The marquis's valet was summoned and directed to bring the articles which the doctor named. These were pure Madeira wine, of an old brand; a little pure, sweet cream, without any mixture of milk; hot water, sugar, and materials for mixing.

What more he wanted the doctor brought up from the mystic depths of his leathern saddle-bags.

The articles sent for were brought; the cordial was prepared, and the marquis drank it. It did not nauseate him, nor did it distress him. He took a few spoonfuls at a time, until he had taken as much as the physician thought proper; and when, half an hour later, he said he felt better, Dr. Tobey assured him that he might count upon six-and-thirty hours at the least, he felt safe in promising forty-eight.

The doctor remained half an hour longer, and before he left he gave the eight and forty hours as the limit of assurance. He felt warranted in so doing.

If a pleasant surprise could act upon the marquis with restorative effect he was to experience the sensation. The doctor had not been gone fifteen minutes when the valet looked in and announced that Mr. Lawrence, the attorney, was in waiting without and would like to see his lordship.

Roderic leaped to his feet at the announcement, and ordered that the old man should be admitted instantly.

"My dear old friend, a kind Providence has had a hand in this. Of all the world you are the man I most wished to see, and I was thinking, as my valet appeared, that I would like to send for you this very night."

"Thank Heaven, then, that I have come. Let me hope that I find you comfortable. I met the doctor in the court."

The marquis pointed the old man to a seat,

and then, in few and simple words, told to him the story of the doctor's visit, told the whole truth, closing with:

"There is no need of hoping, or of attempting to cheer me. I know that the end is near. I have thought so before, but I know it now! But you have an errand of your own. What is it?"

Plainly and succinctly the lawyer told the story of Mark Dowler's intelligence, delivered at his office, and of the departure of the detective with a goodly force in quest of George Conway.

"And," he said, in closing, "we may look to see the young man back on the day after to-morrow."

"Then I will live until he comes! I will live! I shall live! I feel it in my very bones! But, Lawrence, I will make my will. I have thought it all over and have resolved to make it as though Arthur were living."

"Of course you will. Bless you! we have no official notice of his demise. And, further, we can provide for that contingency. You can make all provision that you would make in the absolute condition of his death. If you will say so, I will go at the work at once. There are plenty of blank forms in the old secretaire."

"Yes. Go at it at once. I can sleep in my chair, if I wish, while you fill up the verbiage. Oh! thank God for Conway's safety and for his sure return! We shall know, now, who and what this colonel is."

"I hope so."

"Oh, we shall. Conway told me enough to give me the assurance. That is, putting what he told me with what the rascal himself has since developed, and the assurance may be depended upon. Ho! I shall live till he comes!"

And then the weary nobleman sank back to rest, and ere long thereafter the pen of the old lawyer was scratching its way over the paper, making the Last Will and Testament of the Fifteenth Marquis of Mendon.

(To be Continued.)



["PAPA WILL BE EXPECTING ME HOME. WHAT SHALL I DO?"]

THE BEAUTIFUL MISS BEVERLEY;

OR,

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

A NOVELETTE.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

CHAPTER I.

A BOLD ENTERPRISE.

HER name was Maude, and it just suited her. There was something about Miss Beverley's stately beauty which accorded well with the name of the haughty empress of olden time; for the rest she was rarely lovely, as became the last descendant of a long line of barons; her bright, chestnut-coloured hair was curled low on her white neck, her dark blue eyes were clear and expressive, their long lashes contrasting perfectly with the creamy white of her complexion; she was tall and slight, her step firm and carriage erect.

From the time she could speak her word had been law at Beverley Manor. She was twenty-one now, and her sway had never been disturbed. Lord Beverley fairly worshipped his daughter; he could never forget that she was all that was left to him of the young wife for whom he had sacrificed all thought of worldly advantage.

The fortunes of the Beverleys had been at a very low ebb even so far back as two years before Maude's birth, but a certain heiress cousin had been quite willing to bestow herself and her gold upon the frank, handsome, generous baron.

Her money would have restored the ancient glory of the Manor and made Lord Beverley the wealthiest nobleman in Blankshire, but unfortunately before he had proposed to the Lady Julia

fate threw into his way a certain Adela Charteris—a penniless orphan, whose blood was as blue as his own, but who was financially a beggar.

Lord Beverley loved her, forgot his pressing need of money, forgot the heavy mortgages on the Manor, and asked her to be his wife.

It was a mad thing, everybody said, but the two chiefly concerned were rarely, wondrously happy, and when barely a year later Adela, Lady Beverley, was called away from her earthly honours her husband was broken-hearted.

Everyone said he must marry again; his duty to the child his wife had left behind her demanded so much of him—besides, his affairs were more desperate than ever. If money had been needed two years before it was ten times more needed now.

Lady Julia had bestowed herself and her fortune upon a needy baronet, but there were other heiresses to be found who would smile upon the handsome young widower. But for once persuasions, advice, remonstrance, all failed; for once a man was found faithful to the dead.

Lord Beverley never even thought of a second marriage. It would have seemed to him a slight to his Adela's memory. He sold a portion of his estates, cleared off the worst of his debts, and settled down with his little daughter at the Manor.

However scanty might be her father's means, however doubtful her own future, Maude Beverley was bred up in luxury; no wish of hers was left ungratified, and when at eighteen a far-off cousin of her mother's presented her at Court all London raved about her beauty.

She took it very calmly; flattery and admiration might have spoilt many a girl. Miss Beverley received it almost as her due. She had been worshipped ever since she could remember; it was only adding to the number of her worshippers.

"Maude, do you ever mean to marry?"

It was three years after her début that her father asked this question. The season was over and a large party of guests were assembled at

the Manor, so that it was but seldom the host and his daughter had a tête-à-tête.

Maude was sitting on a low chair, ready dressed for dinner, the long folds of her rich white silk swept the ground, the Beverley diamonds flashed on her neck and arms. She looked like a queen; anything more unlike the daughter of a ruined race it would have been impossible to imagine.

She turned to her father with a half-smile.

"Are you in a great hurry to lose me, papa?"

"I should like to see you safe under a husband's protection. I am getting an old man, Maude."

"You are not sixty yet," reprovingly.

"Ah! but I do not come of a long-lived race; besides, trouble ages men as much as years, my child."

The girl's voice softened inexpressibly as she said, caressingly:

"You are thinking of my mother?"

"Yes; she would have guarded our child better than I have done."

Something in his manner alarmed Maude.

"No one could have been more tender to me than you, papa, no one in the whole world."

"And yet I have ruined you!"

A strange shudder shook his whole frame as he spoke, and his daughter came to his side and took his hand in hers.

"It's very unkind of you to frighten me so."

"My darling, I have hidden it from you as long as possible. Maude, did you ever cast a thought as to what your position would be if I died before you were married?"

"I should not care," she returned, fondly. "If I had lost you nothing would matter."

"But think now, for my sake."

Thus adjured Maude put one hand to her head, as though to aid her meditations, and after a moment's reflection said, gravely:

"I know you could not give me a fortune, you have always told me so, but my godmother, Cousin Julia, left me twenty thousand pounds. I daresay that would be enough to keep me quietly in my own old home."

There was no mistaking the agony written in Lord Beverley's face.

"I must tell you the truth," he gasped; "I cannot deceive you any longer, my poor child. I, who sought to make you rich, have only robbed you. Your twenty thousand pounds have been lost in speculations, and Beverley—"

"And Beverley," repeated Maude. "Tell me quickly; I can bear anything better than suspense."

"Beverley has long been mortgaged to its full value, and now they threaten to foreclose."

"And that means—"

"That they will take our home from us, and we shall be turned out into the world beggars!"

Beggars! It seemed hard to realise it in that dainty room, with its countless ornaments. Maude Beverley in her sweeping silken robes and flashing jewels a beggar! It seemed impossible.

Just then the gong sounded, and with an aching heart Miss Beverley went to the drawing-room to marshal her guests in to dinner.

As she followed them, leaning on the arm of Viscount Norton, a nobleman who had long been one of her admirers, it seemed to her that all she had just heard must be a dream.

She sat in her usual place at the sumptuously-appointed table, and all the time her heart was beating with a passionate pain. Leave Beverley! Leave the place where she had been born! It would drive her mad.

Her preoccupation did not escape Lord Norton's attention. To him the beautiful Miss Beverley had long been an object of great admiration. He really loved her as much as he was capable of loving anything except himself.

The viscount was what is sometimes termed a "model young man." He did not smoke or drink or gamble. He had not a single folly incidental to youth. He had spent the ten years which had elapsed since his majority in an untiring effort to free his estates from the burden of debt with which they were encumbered, and this at last accomplished he was free to cease the rigid parsimony he had practised, and to seek a wife.

His choice had long been fixed on Miss Beverley, and but for one drawback he would have spoken months before. He had no wish to marry for money, but he could not afford to choose a penniless wife. Maude's twenty thousand pounds just suited him. It was enough to provide entirely for her and her children (if Heaven sent them any) and it was not enough to make him looked upon as a fortune-hunter.

He would have spoken before but for the one drawback already hinted at. He could not allow Maude's fortune to be settled entirely on herself. He had no desire to fritter it away. The principal might be tied up, but the interest must come to him as a slight increase to his own income. This being so he had deemed it best to wait until his destined bride was of age.

"Come out into the grounds, it is a lovely evening, and the air will do your headache good," Lord Norton said to Maude, when he returned to the drawing-room and found her sitting, white and languid, in a low chair.

She knew pretty well what was coming. Girls who have run the gauntlet of three London seasons can generally guess when a proposal is imminent. She made no attempt at demur, but followed the viscount through the open French windows, down the terrace steps to the pleasant gardens which lay beyond.

Even then she had not made up her mind what to answer him. Love had as yet left Maude's heart completely free. She thought sometimes she would never love at all. Some women lived their lives through without love. Why not she? She liked Lord Norton very much. His name and family were as ancient as her own. There was no doubt he would prove an exemplary husband.

"I suppose I had better say yes," thought the girl, wearily. "If we have to leave Beverley nothing else matters much."

So when Lord Norton told his story in a quiet, well-bred manner without any excitement or

enthusiasm, she accepted him and let him press a formal kiss upon her brow in token of their engagement.

"I wonder how other girls feel," thought poor Maude, as she lay awake that night listening to the striking of a distant clock, "I always thought when one was engaged one felt quite changed. Well, I am just the same. I love papa and Beverley a hundred times better than Lord Norton. It will be very dull living with him always."

And with that last reflection she closed her tired eyes and slept the sleep of exhaustion, for the excitement and wakefulness of the last few hours had almost worn her out.

The day was far advanced when Maude awoke. A dim sense that something had happened troubled her, then as her brain grew clearer the whole truth came back to her, and with it the fact of her engagement.

Miss Beverley was in no hurry to see her lover. It was quite eleven before she left her own room in a dainty toilet of pink cambric and white lace which suited her exquisitely. She went to the drawing-room first; to her surprise it was empty. She rang the bell abruptly, and heard that her guests were one and all in their own rooms directing their minds in the solemn mysteries of packing.

"What on earth does it mean?" speaking aloud unconsciously in her surprise.

Lord Beverley had entered unperceived, and laid one hand upon her shoulder.

"I think they have heard of my embarrassment, and, like rats, are hastening to leave a falling house. My darling, be brave—don't let them see how it hurts you. I could not have believed it of any of them. Ah! one may well say 'Defend me from my friends.'"

"And Lord Norton?"

"He came to me this morning and asked my views respecting the settlement of your fortune. When he heard that it no longer existed he begged to decline entering any further upon the subject."

Maude Beverley's eyes flashed like fire.

"Coward!"

"I think he suffers too."

"He has no more feeling than a chair. Do you know, papa, it is almost a relief to me?—I had begun to dread it."

And when she was left alone this sense of her freedom was her only comfort. The thought that she was not destined through life to listen to Lord Norton's improving conversation restored her spirits.

Her pride lent her courage, and she was able to receive the adieux and excuses of her guests with a cool composure which astonished them.

"The morning post seems to have been quite a harbinger of ill news," she said, coldly, after listening to the various pretexts. "I wonder such a quantity of misfortunes did not weigh down the letter bag."

The ladies of the party saw that she had read them aright, and one or two felt thoroughly ashamed of themselves as they drove away from the Manor.

"Her pride will have a fall," said one pretty widow, who herself had had designs upon Lord Norton. "She will find it very different when she is no longer Miss Beverley of the Manor."

"She will still be the daughter of a long line of nobles," returned the widow's sister, Mrs. Cleveland, a pleasant, sweet-faced woman, who all along had talked of leaving the Manor on this particular day, but who, at one word from Maude, would gladly have remained with her in this time of trouble.

Lord Beverley and his daughter were left alone to face their sorrows. The ruin which had been so long impending had come now—the time-honoured name of Beverley must be in the "Gazette," their old ancestral home must pass into the hands of strangers; but the hardest part of all to Maude's proud spirit was that even after they had given up everything—when they went forth from the Manor penniless—there would not be enough to pay the debts which had been accumulating for more than two and twenty years.

It had been a luxurious life that Lord

Beverley had led, and no one quite guessed how near his ruin really was, consequently he had not been troubled much for money, not even the bills for Lady Beverley's funeral and Maude's christening robe had been paid for.

"Who will have the Manor?" asked the girl, with a pitiful tremble in her voice. "Will it be sold, papa?"

"It will go to the mortgagee, Maude—a retired ironmonger," and Lord Beverley groaned aloud. "Everything that is in the place will be his. I wonder what he will do with the pictures. Sell them or pass them off for his own ancestors."

"And he is very rich, papa?"

"He is so rich, my dear, that the sum he lent me was nothing to him. Mr. Cameron has two hundred thousand pounds a year."

"Do you think he would wait?" It hurt her pride terribly to make the suggestion, but, after all, anything was better than leaving their dear old home.

"My dear, it would be of no use. I am an old man, Maude, I could not make a fortune."

"But if we had time," persisted Maude, "time just to get used to it. Did you ever see Mr. Cameron, papa? Is he a very common man?"

"I never saw him in my life, dear. The lawyers settled everything. I remember hearing he was a first-rate man of business."

"And where does he live?"

"He has a place near Birmingham somewhere I fancy."

"Papa, I shall go to him."

Lord Beverley shook his head.

"It would be useless. Why expose yourself to a needless degradation?"

"He can but refuse," persisted Maude. "He might leave us the dear old home for a few years. It is worth trying, papa."

"But think of the distance."

"We are only an hour from London. I dare say if I left here at twelve I should get to Mr. Cameron's by his tea time, that sort of people always dine early, I think."

"You will take your maid?"

She shook her head.

"It would be out of place, papa. Remember, I go to this Mr. Cameron as a suppliant—as a beggar. It would never do to take a servant who is infinitely better dressed and more lady-like, I imagine, than his own daughters."

Maude Beverley had been brought up, like others of her rank, in profound contempt for trade. She really had no precise idea what an ironmonger was. There was a small shop in Beverley village where they sold saucepans and kitchen pokers. Perhaps Mr. Cameron had once owned a similar business, only he seemed to have found it more successful than his humbler brother in Beverley.

It was a lovely September day when Maude started upon her self-imposed task. She wore a close-fitting dress of black cashmere and a plain straw hat trimmed with long drooping feathers, but even thus unadorned she was a wonderfully beautiful creature.

"Wish me luck, papa," she cried, with a vain attempt at cheerfulness.

Lord Beverley groaned aloud. Never had his culpable negligence come home to him with such force as now, when he realised that it was sending his only child as a suppliant to the man who now owned the home which by every law of right and inheritance should have been her own.

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE COINCIDENCE.

BRAVE as she had felt when talking of her expedition, Maude's courage sank as she journeyed rapidly towards London, and a vague regret seized her that she had attempted such a task as the one that lay before her.

Lord Beverley's daughter had never travelled alone in her life. From babyhood to womanhood she had been considered too precious to undertake the shortest journey alone, and though of

course since her début she had spent a great deal of time in London she knew as little of the business part of the great capital as the merest child.

Arrived at Victoria Station the girl stood looking helplessly about her, uncertain where to go next, when the bright idea of a cab came to her.

She noticed whilst walking to it that a dirtily dressed woman pressed against her once or twice and then disappeared rapidly as Maude sprang into the cab, but no thought of connecting the woman with herself came to her, and she gave the order Paddington Station in her usual voice.

It seemed a long drive. Maude felt faint and weary. Already she wished she had had some refreshment at Victoria, but all things have an end, and at last the cab reached its destination and Maude inquired the fare.

What it was she did not hear—a dreadful fear seized her; she put her hand into her pocket and brought it back empty. Her purse was not there. Again and again she sought it with the same result.

"I must have been robbed," she said, timidly, to the cabman, "my purse has been taken."

"Can't help that, miss; I must have my fare."

To cabby Maude Beverley in her youth and beauty was nothing more than a refractory adventuress. He did not believe a word of her story. Young women weren't quite such simpletons as to be robbed in the broad daylight. Oh, dear, no!

A little crowd had collected, and every instant was making Maude's position more unendurable when a gentleman stepped forward from among the bystanders and raising his hat courteously said:

"I am afraid you have lost your purse—allow me to settle with this fellow."

"Fellow, indeed?" retorted cabby, offendedly. "Why, I'm an honest man with a wife and seven children."

The stranger made no reply. Taking out his purse he selected the fare demanded, and handing it to the cabman recommended him to take his departure. The crowd finding the affair thus tamely settled followed in cabby's wake, and Maude Beverley found herself alone with her benefactor.

He was a strikingly handsome man of five or six and thirty, one of those faces which you might pick out among a crowd of foreigners as belonging to an Englishman. His hair was dark brown, but his beard and moustache were much lighter, having almost a golden shade; his eyes were grey, large and thoughtful. But the thing which most impressed Maude was the charm of his manner.

She had seen some of the most aristocratic men in England and she knew that none of them would have rescued her from her embarrassment with a more courtly grace. He seemed almost to make her forget her obligations by appearing to forget them himself.

"May I take your ticket for you?" he asked, simply, as though it were the most natural question in the world.

"I should be very much obliged," almost stammered Maude. "I have to go to Kingsdene on business of great importance, and as my home is in Kent it would delay me very much to return there for funds."

He smiled at her agitation.

"I am not surprised at your loss," he said, coolly; "unsuspecting people are always victimised."

He disappeared to take the ticket. When he returned and placed it in her hand she saw that it was a first-class return.

"I thought you would not stay long at Kingsdene," he said, lightly; "it is a miserable little village, don't you think so?"

"I have never been there."

He looked surprised, then checked himself and suggested that as the train did not start for half an hour he should bring her some refreshments.

"You will be completely knocked up," as she refused. "Do be sensible!"

Maude blushed. It was a new thing for anyone to take such a tone of authority with her; but she rather liked it.

"I am ashamed of giving you so much trouble," she said, awkwardly, and it was perhaps the first time she had ever felt awkward in her life.

"I am used to taking care of young ladies," he said, simply. "I have had a sister of my own, and she might any day have been placed in the same predicament as yourself."

This calm, matter-of-fact way of speaking relieved Maude's scruples. She accompanied her unknown friend to the refreshment room, and did ample justice to the dainty repast which presently appeared. As soon as she had finished he looked at his watch.

"We had better be taking our seats."

"Are you going too?" with a strange, new sense of relief at the thought.

"Nearly all the way; my home is a few miles this side of Kingsdene."

Maude Beverley sighed as she leant back in her corner of the first-class carriage. All this was very pleasant, but the worst part of her undertaking still lay before her. She had to see that dreadful Mr. Cameron and to endeavour to melt his heart. Could she possibly borrow half a sovereign of him? If not what was to become of her? The return half of her ticket would take her back to Paddington certainly, but then many weary miles would still stretch between her and the Manor.

Her companion regarded her with a grave interest, not unminged with curiosity. To him it seemed incredible that any father or mother should allow their daughter to roam about alone as this girl was doing.

She was beautiful enough to turn a man's head and patrician was stamped on every feature of her face. What business could possibly have brought her to Kingsdene?

He knew the place so well—a little, straggling village, which but for its being a connecting link with three other villages would have never been honoured with a railway station.

"Are you quite sure," he asked her, when they had been fellow travellers for two hours, and he felt more at his ease with her, "that Kingsdene is the station you want?"

"Oh, yes."

"Because I ought to warn you that it is a most rustic place. I don't think anyone there would offer inducements for you to visit them."

She smiled sadly.

"Strange things happen sometimes."

"Evidently. I don't think there are half a dozen private houses in Kingsdene."

"I don't think I want a private house."

"And there is not a lady or gentleman in the place, except at the Rectory. Perhaps that is the clue to the mystery; you are going on a visit to the rector."

"Oh, no!" decidedly.

He smiled.

"I must not express my opinion, of course, but I should advise you to return as soon as you can. I am quite sure Kingsdene is not a fit place for you to stay in alone."

"I am the best judge of that."

"Forgive me my officiousness."

But she did not forgive him. She forgot the kindness he had shown her and she sulked in her corner until the train stopped at a pretty roadside station, and before she had time to be surprised he alighted with a courteous bow.

She saw the station-master and porters touch their hats to him with obsequious politeness, and noticed that a waggone drawn by prancing greys and with liveried servants was in waiting for him.

Not until he had driven off did she recollect that she was indebted to him for more than two sovereigns, including her lunch, and that she had not the slightest idea to whom to send them. She could have cried with vexation at her own carelessness.

A little paper packet arrested her attention. During the last few minutes he had been busy writing; perhaps he had put down his name and address as a delicate reminder of his loan. But

no; the paper contained a golden sovereign and underneath was scrawled, in a clear, bold hand:

"FORGIVE me the impertinence, but you can't go home penniless. If the burden lies too heavily upon your pride you can put the trifle into the poor-box with as handsome interest as you like."

How thoughtful he had been. Maude found herself comparing him with Viscount Norton, very much to the latter's detriment.

Another five minutes and the train stopped at Kingsdene. Maude tucked the sovereign and her return ticket carefully into her glove. She expected no difficulty in finding Mr. Cameron. It was a small place, where most likely everyone knew everyone. She addressed herself to a porter.

"Do you know where a Mr. Cameron lives, please?"

"Mr. Cameron?" and the man's face brightened as though the name recalled pleasant thoughts. "He lives at the Park, miss. Did you want to go there?"

"I think it cannot be the same Mr. Cameron. The one I mean is an iron—"

"Ironworks! Oh, yes, he has, miss, and plenty of 'em. You should have got out at the last station though, miss—Marton's a sight nearer the Park than here."

"But I was told Kingsdene."

"That's the address for letters, miss; but you see this station is at one end of Kingsdene and the Park's just beyond the other—high on six miles off."

"Can I have a cab?"

"A cab! Bless you, miss, none come up here unless they're ordered. If it had been Tuesday, now, you might have got a seat in the carrier's cart, I daresay."

Humble as was that conveyance Maude found herself regretting that she could not change Monday into Tuesday. But it was in vain. There was nothing for it but to ask for the direction and walk bravely on.

She was little used to such exertion. The six miles seemed to be twelve, and when she reached a neat white stone lodge she was ready to drop.

"And it is all a mistake after all most likely. I don't believe an ironmonger could live in a house like this."

She walked on up the avenue, her feet aching sadly, and at last she reached the grand entrance. A butler and two footmen stood talking in the hall.

"Can I see Mr. Cameron?"

The butler shook his head.

"My master does not see strangers, ma'am—he is not well enough."

"But it is of the utmost importance."

She little guessed how tired and weary she looked, and that her beauty softened the butler's heart far more than her words.

"If you'll step into the library, ma'am, I'll take up your name, but I doubt if the master will see anyone."

He ushered her into a lofty room hung with book-cases and furnished in carved oak. Maude was obliged to confess that if John Cameron was a tradesman he possessed a library worthy of a duke. Then her breath stood still with surprise as from over the mantelpiece there smiled on her the kindly eyes of her railway friend.

"Mr. Cameron cannot know *him*," she thought, "it would be impossible."

But the picture with large gilt frame continued to assert that the impossibility was a fact.

CHAPTER III.

MISS BEVERLEY CLOSES HER CAREER.

It seemed hours to Maude Beverley before the butler returned.

"Will you send up your name and business, please, ma'am?"

It was humiliating—she who had reigned as queen of the highest circles in London to be so little esteemed here that she was told to send

up her name and business by a servant—but necessity is a hard master.

Maude thought of her beautiful home, and that her only chance of saving it lay in the interview with Mr. Cameron. This conquered her pride.

"My name is Beverley," she said, quietly. "My business is private. Mr. Cameron will know it when he hears my name."

Another ten minutes of solitude and the man returned. He led the way upstairs to a small sitting-room fitted up with every luxury suited to an invalid. Here on a sofa was an elderly gentleman with a grave, thoughtful face.

Maude decided she was entirely on a wrong track. This could never be the Mr. Cameron she wanted.

"There must be some mistake," she began, nervously, when the servant had left them.

Mr. Cameron smiled.

"I am John Cameron of Kingsdene, if that is whom you are seeking. I must say I was surprised when my servant told me Miss Beverley was here."

"You hold the mortgages of the Manor. It is you who are going to turn us from our home."

"Am I speaking to the daughter of Lord Beverley? Did he send you here?"

"I am his only child. I came of my own accord. I thought you might have pity on us." Mr. Cameron looked distressed.

"Are you acquainted with the facts of the case?"

"Entirely."

"You know then that there are debts on every side. Even if I forebore my claim there are hundreds of others. Lord Beverley has been imprudent all his life—latterly he has speculated recklessly. Even if I resigned all claim to the Manor he could never live in it. He has not the means to keep it up, and his credit is at an end."

Maude looked perplexed.

"I cannot see why we should be poorer this year than we were last. It is not as if papa were in business," with a marked stress upon the word business.

"When Lord Beverley came into the title the estate was excessively encumbered. Instead of paying off his debts he has added to them year by year, and now ruin is inevitable."

She rose abruptly. She had never quite realised how hopeless a case it was until Mr. Cameron put it before her in this cold, matter-of-fact manner. She did not know how he felt for her, and that beneath his cold composure there lurked a real sympathy.

"Are you staying in Kingsdene, Miss Beverley?"

"No, I only came for this."

"It is impossible that you can return home to-night," glancing at a small ormolu clock on the chimney-piece. "Will you allow me to offer you the shelter of my house? Indeed you will be more comfortable here than at the village inn, and as the last train has gone that is your only alternative."

A moment's hesitation and Maude accepted. An hour before if anyone had told her she should spend a night at Mr. Cameron's she would have laughed, but she saw nothing else to do.

"I will not inflict myself upon you," said the master of the Park, simply. "I can quite understand that in your eyes I am an intolerable usurper. Unfortunately my daughter is not at home, but the housekeeper will show you every attention."

He rang the bell and desired Mrs. Bland to be sent for. A pleasant, elderly woman in a black silk dress soon appeared.

"This young lady is Miss Beverley," said Mr. Cameron, quietly. "She has missed the last train to London and must sleep here. You had better give her Miss Lucy's rooms, and see that she is made comfortable."

He did not offer to shake hands, which Maude chose to consider as a slight, although she would probably have been offended had he done so.

Miss Lucy's room proved to be a dainty suite

of apartments, as elegant and luxurious as Maude's own boudoir at the Manor.

Mrs. Bland did her best for the young lady so strangely confided to her care, persuaded her to take off her things and rest on the sofa, and then went downstairs to see after some refreshments.

When she came back, followed by a maid bearing a temptingly arranged tray, Maude was reclining on the sofa as naturally as though she were at home.

"I forgot," she exclaimed, as Mrs. Bland poured out the tea and pressed her to eat and drink. "Papa will be expecting me home. Oh! what shall I do?"

"Don't feel uneasy, miss, the master has telegraphed to Lord Beverley, and he has ordered the carriage to take you to the station in time for the ten o'clock train to-morrow morning. The master thought you would be anxious to get home as soon as possible."

"How kind of him," forgetting he was the cruel enemy who was robbing her of her home.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Bland, "there's not many gentlemen as thoughtful as the master. Mr. Geoffrey has a kind heart, but I don't think he'll ever equal his father."

"Is there no Mrs. Cameron?"

"She's been dead this many a year, miss. Poor Miss Lucy was but a child when she went."

"Why do you call her poor?"

"Well, you see, miss," wiping away a tear, "it's not so long yet since she left us, and I've not got used to it."

"Do you mean she is dead?"

"Just that, miss. She went in the spring. It well nigh broke her father's heart, and Mr. Geoffrey's never looked the same since."

And so the good woman chatted on, and it never occurred to Maude to ask whose picture stood in the library, she had almost forgotten her railway companion.

She left the Park early next morning and travelled quickly homewards. It was late in the afternoon when she reached the Manor, and a great pain seized her as she remembered that she had still to break the news of her failure to her father—she had buoyed him up with false hopes, and now the disappointment would be all the greater.

A strange shadow seemed to hang over the place. As she drew near the house she noticed that every blind was down, but the day had been unusually hot and she ascribed the lowered blinds to a desire to shut out the sunshine.

"Where is my father?" she asked the butler.

The man hesitated, tried to say something, but Maude did not wait for a reply. His face had filled her with a new, unspoken dread, and she rushed upstairs to her father's room.

There upon his bed, very calm and peaceful, rested all that was left of the late Lord Beverley. His foibles had been many, but after all he had been a devoted husband and a loving father.

Had he left her a large fortune instead of robbing her of one she could not have wept more bitter tears than those she shed now.

They told her afterwards that he had died barely an hour after she had left him.

The doctor said it was heart disease, and declared the late lord had been subject to it for years.

"He has had his wish," thought Maude, sorrowfully. "He has never had to form another home. He died while the Manor was still ours. Ah! why could not I do the same? Why must I live on lonely and a beggar?"

When the day of the funeral came she had to undergo the ordeal of an interview with her father's lawyer. He was an old man, grown grey in the service of the Beverleys, and all his sympathy was for the daughter of his client.

"It will be better than he could have hoped," he told her, cheerfully. "Lord Beverley's last venture has turned out successfully, and when everything is realised there will be enough to pay every creditor in full."

"Are you sure?"

"I am quite sure. I wish I could say the same respecting any provision for yourself. That I fear is an impossibility."

"I do not care if I have to leave the Manor. It does not matter to me how I live, only I am glad that no stain will rest on my father's memory, no one will be able to say he injured them."

Mr. Newton went away without thinking it necessary to tell her that he had in his pocket an anonymous letter, announcing that whatever sum was required to clear the honour of the late Lord Beverley would be forthcoming.

The old lawyer had been puzzled enough by that letter himself, and as he had a very poor idea of a woman's head for business he decided not to speak of it to Maude.

Another day or two and the beautiful Miss Beverley, who had been the belle of three London seasons, left her home and went out into the cold, bleak world, where she must henceforward struggle alone.

It was strange how friendless she appeared barely six weeks before when Lord Beverley first broke to her the tidings of their impending ruin.

She had been the favourite of many an aristocratic matron. Girls had vied with each other in accepting her invitations, and she had more admirers than she cared to count.

They had all disappeared—vanished as completely as a dream. The Maude Beverley who left the Manor in a plain black dress heavily trimmed with crape was a very different person from the bright, dazzling beauty everyone had been eager to know such a little time before.

Even the far-off relative who had presented her at Court and been wont to take a pride in her attractions forsook her.

She wrote a formal letter, in which she assured her kinswoman that her present troubles were a judgment on her for having refused so many eligible parties, and having thus done her duty by her late protégée she washed her hands of her and went abroad.

"My dear young lady, may I ask your plans?" the faithful old lawyer had said to her when he first realised that there would not be a penny for her.

"I shall teach, I suppose," said Maude, dejectedly. "It is the only thing a lady can do. I would far rather drown myself, but I suppose people would call that wicked."

Mr. Newton was positively frightened at the look in her eyes as she spoke. He went home and had a long consultation with his pretty invalid wife, and the result was that the dear old lady penned a simple note to Miss Beverley urging her to make their house her home until her plans were settled.

The note was very short and simple, but the invitation was so evidently genuine that Maude accepted it at once. She would be more likely to gain a situation if under the surveillance of a respected solicitor like Mr. Newton than if living alone in the only apartments her purse could afford.

Bedford Square in September was a dreary prospect enough, but there was nothing petty about Maude. She might sigh for her beloved home and her idolised father, but she never wasted idle regrets on bygone splendours and luxuries.

Mr. and Mrs. Newton received her with warmth as an honoured guest, and the latter begged her not to hurry herself in leaving them.

"Until you meet with something really eligible, where you feel you will be happier than with us, we hope you will stay."

"I must not be a burden on you; you are very kind, but I ought to be independent."

"Well, my dear, please yourself, only remember we are glad to have you just as long as you like to stay."

They lived very simply, this childless couple, but there was nothing in their ménage to shock the most fastidious taste. Nine o'clock breakfast, lunch at one, and dinner at six was the routine of the day. They kept but little company, owing to Mrs. Newton's delicate health,

and Maude had been there almost a month before going down to the drawing-room. One evening, dressed for dinner, she encountered a visitor.

Mr. Newton presented him to her as Mr. Douglas, but before she heard the name a vivid blush rose in her cheeks. She had recognised her friend of the railway station, the gentleman to whose generosity she owed it that she had ever penetrated to Mr. Cameron's presence.

The recognition was mutual.
"We have met before," said Mr. Douglas, pleasantly. "We were fellow travellers once from London to Marton. Did you find my verdict of Kingdene a correct one, Miss Beverley?"

"I do not know," with more confusion than she had ever felt before.

"Ah!" he said, in another tone. "I forgot that you have been in said trouble since that. I hope you will accept my sympathy, even though I am a stranger."

"You are very kind," stiffly.

They went down to dinner then, and in the course of the repast Maude learned that this was the first visit Mr. Douglas had paid to Bedford Square.

"But I hope you will let me come often," he said to Mrs. Newton, with a ready smile. "Some very particular business is detaining me in London, and I feel very homesick in consequence."

"You do not live near London then?"

"Oh, no, in Warwickshire."

It was on the tip of Maude's tongue to ask him if he knew Mr. Cameron, but somehow she thought the question might seem odd. There was nothing but that fact of the picture to make her think he had any acquaintance with the Park, and Mr. Cameron might easily have bought the portrait if, as Maude fancied, Mr. Douglas was one of the notables of the Court.

"What a charming young man!" said Mrs. Newton, after their guest had left. "Why did you never bring him home before?"

"He is a recent acquaintance," said Mr. Newton, shortly, with a meaning glance at his wife, which told her he did not wish to pursue the subject before Miss Beverley.

Maude's search for employment had hitherto been fruitless. She had begun to realise that one's talents and accomplishments were regarded from a very different standard when we wish to use them as a means of livelihood to where they are merely displayed for the amusement of admiring friends.

Lord Beverley had given his child a refined education. She played beautifully, and spoke French as well as English, but she had no system or routine, was sadly deficient in what people term "solids," and when asked her experience was obliged to confess that she had had nothing to do with children in her life. Besides, Maude was too beautiful for a governess; the lovely face which had been so universally admired was not suited to an instructress of youth.

Sensible, middle-class mothers could not imagine that brilliant vision conducting their brood for a walk, and Maude never applied to people of her own rank. It would be bitter enough to eat the bread of dependence in any house, but it would be ten times more bitter to eat it anywhere where she had once been received as an equal.

The weeks passed on, the days grew shorter, Christmas was approaching, and still the orphan daughter of the Beverleys stayed on in Bedford Square, the guest of her father's old friend, who had tried hard by patient counsel and faithful advice to stem the tide of affairs which had gone so badly for his patron.

"Why should you not stay with us always?" asked Mrs. Newton, gently, one afternoon in Christmas week when Maude had returned discouraged from an interview which had sounded very promising.

"You don't understand," a little petulantly. "I am not a beggar, and I can't go on living on charity for ever."

The invalid never resented the petulance, she understood the suffering that caused it.

"If we were related to you," she said, kindly, "you would think nothing of spending two or three years with us. I know quite well that we are not of your order, but I think you would be safer and happier here than as a governess among strangers."

"Not of my order!" repeated Maude, indignantly. "As if that made any difference."

"It might well," returned her hostess.

"Why did you speak of two or three years?" resumed Maude. "It would be no easier for me to get employment then than now."

Mrs. Newton laid one hand upon the girl's shoulder and turned her face towards the great centre looking-glass.

"My dear," she said, fondly, "you were not made for a lonely life. Long before the time I mentioned you will be married."

She went out of the room then and left Maude to her own thoughts. The girl's heart beat rapidly; never since her father's death had the idea of marriage come to her. As Miss Beverley of the Manor she had had troops of admirers without caring very much for any of them; now for the first time it flashed upon her that these last few weeks had been all futile to her. She had suffered her heart to slip out of her own keeping; she loved Mr. Douglas with the whole strength of her nature.

The Beverleys were an enthusiastic, passionate race; with them to love once was to love always. Maude had fancied she was the exception; she could pass through the world scathless, and never know the divine passion. She recognised her mistake now.

Looking back she wondered she had not guessed her own secret before. Mr. Douglas was always at Bedford Square, they were naturally thrown a great deal together, and the kind authority and masterfulness of his manner had always had a charm for Maude.

"The first moment I saw him," she thought, sadly, "I felt as no other man had ever made me feel. Well, I have made a great mistake. He is good and noble, he is worthy the love of a duchess, but he cares nothing in the world for me."

"Dreaming in the firelight, Miss Beverley?" and the object of her thoughts entered unannounced, as had lately become his custom.

"Yes, I think so," said Maude, involuntarily withdrawing to a seat where the firelight would not fall upon her face and reveal its tear stains.

"It is a tempting habit."

"Do you indulge in it?"

"Invariably. Whenever I am in any perplexity I sit looking at the fire as though I could see a way out of my dilemma written in the flames. I have spent the afternoon in this fashion to-day."

"Were you in any dilemma?"

"Indeed I was."

"And have you found the remedy?"

"I think so. I am going home."

"Going home?" trying hard to hide the sadness she felt at the news.

"My father is getting fidgety at my long absence. He wants me for Christmas."

"And you will come back?"

"I hardly know. It does not depend on me."

"Not on you? Ah! I remember, you were kept in London by business. How is it getting on?"

"I hardly know."

"You do not know?"

"I came to London," strong passion sounding in his voice, "to try to win the one thing needed to make me happy. I have been trying for three months, Miss Beverley, and I sometimes think I am no nearer than when I first began."

A dreadful fear came to Maude that he was going to tell her of some hopeless attachment. She answered quietly.

"I believe, Mr. Douglas, there is nothing in the whole world one may not win with time and patience."

"Even love?"

She was silent. A crimson blush dyed her face.

"I am answered," said Douglas, sadly. "Miss Beverley, will you listen to a story? We may never meet again, and I should like you to hear it."

"I will listen," turning away her head, and preparing to hear of his devotion for her rival.

"A man who had everything wealth could procure to make him happy fell in love. The girl he loved was as beautiful as a fairy, but she was proud. She came of a grand old race, and she had been taught from her infancy to look down upon what she called the 'people.' He did not dare to tell her of his love because his good old father had been a self-made man—because his wealth came from trade. What should he do, Miss Beverley? Should he go away without speaking of his love, and spare her the pain of rejecting him, or should he tell her all—offer her the best love of his life, and try to persuade her to think, with Tennyson, that:

"Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood?"

A long, long silence.

"The decision is with you," he said, gravely, "is it to be speech or silence?"

"Speech," whispered Maude.

"My darling," cried the young man, standing close at her side and looking into her eyes with his clear, dark ones, "you must have seen how I loved you. Tell me, is it all in vain, or could you put aside your pride sufficiently to become a tradesman's wife?"

"I never guessed you cared for me."

"I should have told you long ago but that I feared a rejection. Maude, I cannot offer you a title. I am a tradesman, since my fortune comes through trade, but I promise you no countess shall ever be more beloved, more revered than you if only you will consent and be my wife."

She could not help contrasting this wooing with that of her last suitor. Mr. Douglas spoke with a passion and intensity which had been sadly wanting in Lord Norton.

Maude put her small white hand into her lover's and let him draw her to himself. She had been taught to despise trade and all who followed it, but she loved this man with all the strength of a woman's heart, and what he practised could not be ignoble and mean.

"And you will try to love me, Maude?"

"I need not try," whispered the girl, sweetly. "Oh, Mr. Douglas, when you said you were going away I felt quite miserable."

"I must still go," he answered, holding her a little nearer, "but I will come back. Maude, will you forgive me one deception? I promise you I will never practise another upon you. My darling, my name is not really Douglas—I should say, not only Douglas. My father is John Cameron, and the home where I shall take my bride is the one she has loved and lost. Maude," continued Geoffrey, eagerly, "from the moment I saw you I loved you. When I heard that you were Lord Beverley's daughter I knew that in my own character I should never win your heart. Your pride would never let you marry an ironmaster's son."

"And you are Mr. Cameron's son?"

"His only son. I know of how you saw him once. Maude, believe me, it cost him something to refuse your request, but he acted as he thought rightly."

"Yes," admitted Maude, "it was right that all that string of debt and difficulty should be done away with, even if we had to give up the Manor, and you know it did not hurt dear papa—he never knew the worst."

Long afterwards she knew that her father's name had been cleared solely through Geoffrey's generosity for her sake, that no slur should be cast upon Lord Beverley's memory. He had written to Mr. Newton and offered to advance whatever sum was required to pay the debts in full.

Maude only discovered this by accident when she had been for years an idolised wife. If it had been possible for her to love her husband more this would have made her.

Mr. and Mrs. Newton were delighted at this finale to their favourite's career. The gentle

invalid had rarely been so happy as in choosing the tressou for the future millionaire's wife.

There was a very simple wedding in London, and then Mr. and Mrs. Geoffrey Cameron went down to the Park, and met with an enthusiastic reception from the Kingsdene employes.

John Cameron welcomed his son's wife very kindly.

"My dear," he said, when he found himself alone with her, "from the time I had anything to do with your poor father's affairs I always hoped this might happen. I never hoped it more than after I had seen you."

And with this delicate compliment he presented his wedding gift—the title deeds of Beverley Manor.

Honest John Cameron has gone to his rest now, and Geoffrey has succeeded to his vast fortune. He and his wife reside chiefly at the Park, and this is Maude's wish as much as her husband's. She is not ashamed of the means by which they enjoy wealth, and she thinks that some of the money made at Kingsdene should be spent there.

But every year they pay a visit to the much-loved home of her girlhood, and each spring sees them in London, where young Mrs. Cameron is as great a favourite and as much admired as once was the Beautiful Miss Beverley.

THE HEARTS OF THREE GOOD WOMEN.

(Continued from Page 388.)

Thursday night was a fine, clear, moonlight night. The annuity business was almost forgotten—had not, indeed, been mentioned during dinner.

Miss Witchwood was seated on the sofa on which Godfrey had first seen Eve. Miss Elworth was in her own room. Mrs. Barrycourt was thinking audibly about the annuity, with her eyes closed. Godfrey was reading a book.

A servant entered with two telegrams which had just arrived. She gave one to Godfrey, and the other to Miss Witchwood, and then left the room.

Godfrey opened and read his. It was from "T. Shene, Railway Hotel, E—," and ran thus:

"Just arrived. Find I've time to spare. Accept Miss Witchwood's invitation with thanks. With you on Saturday evening—return to town same night."

Godfrey walked to the sofa and Miss Witchwood, and placed Tom's telegram in her hands. She read it, nodded her head, and returned it to Godfrey.

He saw that she was pale and slightly agitated.

The telegram which she had just received was lying open in her lap.

Godfrey pointed to it.

"Not bad news, I hope," he said.

"I am afraid so," answered Miss Witchwood, with suppressed agitation; then, putting her finger on her lips for an instant, to warn him not to speak loudly and awaken Mrs. Barrycourt, she said, "Read that, Mr. Overseide," and put the telegram in his hands.

Godfrey obeyed her. The telegram was from Mr. Farrands, the banker, and ran thus:

"EXPECT me to-morrow (Friday) to dinner. I wish to speak with you on a matter of great importance."

Godfrey waited for an explanation.

"I am afraid that Mr. Farrands will bring bad news," she said.

"Why do you think that, Miss Witchwood?" asked Godfrey.

"For the first time in my life," she replied, "I can find no reason for my thought. It is extremely weak, I own—extremely contemptible—but, Mr. Overseide, I have what feeble-minded persons are always thinking they have—a presentiment!"

"Nonsense, Miss Witchwood."

"Mr. Farrands is the last man in the world to exaggerate," she said; "Mr. Farrands distinctly says, 'a matter of great importance.'"

"Which you take to be—"

"Not a word to Eve, not a word to Mrs. Barrycourt," she interrupted, quite calmly. "Which I take to be the failure of Farrands, Farrands, and Trett. Mr. Farrands will tell me so on Friday."

"But—"

"How will that touch me?" she said. "In this way. All I have is in that bank. If they fail, Eve and I become almost penniless! Not a word, Mr. Overseide, to Eve!"

CHAPTER X.

"HE WILL ONLY LEAVE POND COURT HOUSE BY DISCHARGING HIMSELF."

MR. JOHN FARRANDS FARRANDS, together with his haughty indolence, smooth face, respectability, and manservant, arrived at Pond Court House on the Friday afternoon.

Miss Witchwood received him alone. She immediately detected a slight embarrassment in his usually unruffled bearing. She delicately put the question which had been troubling her more on Eve's account than her own to him at once.

Had he come to tell her that the bank had failed, or was on the verge of failing?

Mr. Farrands laughed politely at the question. His visit had nothing to do with money or banking in any way. He regretted that his telegram should have alarmed her. He would not say that his bank had never been more prosperous than at the present time, because the safety of his bank was as far above fluctuation on the one side as on the other.

She apologised and laughed at her past fears. She supposed she must have been a little unwell without knowing it. She was not a nervous person, as he knew, nor a person with presentiments. She had been very foolish, and again begged to beg his pardon.

"When I sent that telegram, Miss Witchwood," said the banker, "I acted as I seldom act—on impulse. Directly I determined on telling you—on telling you this matter of importance, which, let me add, is of greater concern to me than to yourself—I was fearful lest I should do what I seldom do—change my mind. To render that impossible I sent the telegram. My rude haste was an unusual action on my part, and it is natural you should have placed an unusual construction on it."

Mr. Farrands paused for a few seconds.

"May I be allowed to postpone our interview till the evening?" he asked.

"If you please," said Miss Witchwood. "Shall we say the library at half-past nine?"

"Thank you," said the banker, with a bow.

Between Mr. Farrands and Miss Witchwood a friendship had existed for years. Usually Mr. Farrands's manner towards her appeared to be perfectly natural. To-day it was not so. Miss Witchwood felt this very strongly, and wondered at it.

"Mr. Farrands," she said, rather bluntly, "you have unpleasant news to tell me. Am I not right?"

"No—really," he said.

"Perhaps you are fatigued by your journey?"

"A little, yes," he said.

There was silence between them for a minute. Mr. Farrands's embarrassment and uncommunicativeness were infectious. Immediately Miss Witchwood felt the infection nearing her she beat it back. Mr. Farrands seemed to be lost involuntarily in a reverie. Miss Witchwood caught his eye, and with a sweet smile exclaimed, softly:

"Thank you!"

"For what?" he asked, rousing himself, and appearing suddenly to be more at his ease.

"For Mr. Overseide," she answered, with a laugh.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the banker, "I declare that I had quite forgotten him. Well, tell me, Miss Witchwood, do you like him?"

The banker spoke as if he were anxious to receive the lady's opinion on a horse or a dog.

"Yes," said Miss Witchwood. "I am almost as grateful to you for recommending Mr. Overseide as I was many years ago, when you lent me five hundred pounds."

"I am extremely delighted to hear it," returned Mr. Farrands, the embarrassment gradually vanishing, "for I have known Mr. Overseide as I was many years ago, when you lent me five hundred pounds."

"No?" he said, speaking very slowly; "he is very unstable—very much to be influenced by circumstances—very easily deceived, pleased, or angered. A man or woman of ordinary intellect could make him at their pleasure a great rogue or a good man. Figuratively speaking, he is warm wax. But, doubtless, you who are so quick-sighted have already observed these faults of his."

"I have observed," replied Miss Witchwood, "that he is very young."

"Exactly," returned Mr. Farrands; "quite true; allowances must be made for the natural frivolity of youth, still—"

"No, no," Miss Witchwood interrupted, with a laugh; "I will hear no more of Mr. Overseide's faults. Your long journey has made you too severe."

The banker smiled. The embarrassment had disappeared entirely.

"I can easily understand," he said, "that Mr. Overseide has given you every satisfaction. I imagined that he would or I should not have recommended him."

"But you seem to regret having done so, Mr. Farrands," she said.

"Not at all," returned the banker, "I have in no particular altered my opinion of Mr. Overseide."

"Yet in your letter to me you wrote of him with praises," she said.

"As a drawing-master to your niece exactly," returned the banker. "I wrote that he was eminently fitted to fill that position—that he was a fair artist—that he was a perfect gentleman; one, perhaps, with too extraordinary notions and uneducated ideas, but still a gentleman. I do not wish to retract what I wrote; on the contrary, I am happy in the belief that when I recommended him I served you both. I was speaking just now of his character as a man. With that, of course, you have no concern. So long as he properly fulfils the duties for which you pay him—and that he will do so I am confident—his character as a man is quite immaterial to you."

"Quite," said Miss Witchwood, wondering why, as that was the case, Mr. Farrands should have touched upon the subject at all.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Farrands, "I have been judging him a little too harshly. I have no doubt his character will alter in time, and for the better. There are excuses for him, I own. He has had to fight the world alone. I have aided him occasionally, certainly, but he has never been under control of any sort, which is an evil circumstance for a young man. He has always been an object of interest to me—a hobby of mine, in fact. Perhaps I am now pursuing my hobby at the expense of boring you?"

"Not at all," said Miss Witchwood.

"I am glad to hear it," he said, "for your good opinion is very necessary to him. The salary you give him is a larger one than he could obtain elsewhere. As he is engaged to be married, and as marriage, I have no doubt, will effect good in him, the loss of his engagement here would be a serious affair."

"Exactly," said Miss Witchwood, then, after a short pause, "Mr. Overseide, I take upon myself to say already, will never lose his engagement here so far as I am concerned. He will only leave Pond Court House by discharging himself."

"Mr. Overseide is a general favourite," said the

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banker. "From a boy he has been a general favourite."

"He has many excellent qualities, Mr. Farrands," she said. "We all like him here. Eve has reason to thank him. Eve is already benefited by the lessons he has given her. Mrs. Barrycourt called him 'her boy' before he had been in the house two days. Mrs. Barrycourt has commenced to work a pair of slippers for him. It speaks well for Mr. Overseide that although he has only been with us for a week, we all regard him already as a friend."

Miss Witchwood terminated the conversation by rising from her chair and saying:

"Make your mind easy, Mr. Farrands. I am much obliged to you for recommending him. I am thoroughly satisfied with Mr. Overseide."

The dinner that evening was rather a dull affair.

Mr. Farrands's bearing towards Godfrey was, as usual, cold and depreciating—towards Eve mildly paternal, towards Mrs. Barrycourt lazily respectful, and towards Miss Witchwood embarrassed.

Godfrey was, according to his own confession, recorded in an earlier place in these pages, always at a disadvantage when in Mr. Farrands's society. The numerous obligations and the slender claim always appeared to Godfrey in Mr. Farrands's words and in Mr. Farrands's face. He said very little during dinner.

The past week had, notwithstanding his separation from Annie, been one of sunshine to him. Now, Mr. Farrands's well-looking body seemed to be placed between Godfrey and the sun, making things dark to Godfrey's eyes.

Besides which, Godfrey fancied that Miss Witchwood was behaving a little coolly to him. He could not tell why he fancied this, nor where there was a difference in her manner. He could only tell that a difference existed—faint and imperceptible to others, but certainly a difference.

Mrs. Barrycourt never talked much during dinner. With her dinner was a very grave duty, which was neither to be shirked nor performed in a volatile spirit.

Eve was silent too, and employed herself in looking first at Mr. Farrands, then at Mr. Overseide, then at her aunt, and then into her own plate. She repeated this several times, occasionally asking Mr. Farrands some trivial question about some London doings, and losing herself in a reverie before he could answer her.

Miss Witchwood was Miss Witchwood. She did all she could to keep the conversation going, and pleasantly, but failed, though through no fault of her own.

The distress which her supposed coolness of manner towards Godfrey gave him positively surprised himself.

They had commenced dinner an hour later than usual that night. At about ten minutes past nine the ladies retired. Godfrey opened the dining-room door and stood there for a few moments. Mrs. Barrycourt passed out. Miss Witchwood, saying to Mr. Farrands "Half-past nine, mind," walked towards the door.

As Eve was staying behind for a few moments speaking to Mr. Farrands, Godfrey ventured to try and relieve his mind concerning Miss Witchwood's coolness.

"One word," he whispered. "Have I offended you in any way?"

For the first time since he had known her an angry flush overspread Miss Witchwood's almost perfect face. It came and vanished in the same instant.

"No, no," she said, smilingly and heartily, "what made you fancy that, Mr. Overseide?"

"Upon my word, I cannot say."

She laughed, shook her head, and held out her hand. They shook hands.

"I forgive you," she said, with a bright smile.

"Then I have offended you?" he said, in surprise.

"No, no; I forgive you for thinking that you had," she answered.

Eve joined her. They passed from the room arm in arm. Godfrey closed the door and re-

seated himself at the table opposite the banker.

Mr. Farrands was a most abstemious man. He smoked one cigar a day, and drank little.

He produced his case. In silence the two men lit their cigars. In silence they smoked.

When Mr. Farrands's cigar ash was half an inch long he knocked it off and broke the silence.

"You are very comfortable here, Mr. Overseide, I believe?" he said.

"I am extremely happy, Mr. Farrands, thank you."

"I have been speaking about you with Miss Witchwood," said the banker. "I am pleased to find that she is tolerably well satisfied with you."

The banker's tone, as usual, distressed Godfrey. He moved uneasily in his chair and poured out a glass of claret.

The banker made another half-inch of cigar ash, and then spoke again.

"You are still engaged to be married to your young friend, the insurance clerk—I mean the housekeeper?"

"No," said Godfrey.

"No?"

"No. I am engaged to be married to the clerk's sister—the housekeeper's daughter. I am engaged to be married to Miss Sheue."

"Exactly," said Mr. Farrands, very comfortably; then, rather suddenly, and with a little more energy, he added, "I leave here to-morrow afternoon. I shall walk to the station if the weather is fine. It is possible that by the time I start I may have settled my mind on a certain question in which you are prominently concerned. In that case, Mr. Overseide, will you accompany me as far as the railway station?"

"Certainly," said Godfrey.

"Thank you," said Mr. Farrands, looking a little uneasily at his watch.

"Am I right?" he asked, showing Godfrey the face of the watch.

"You are a little slower than Pondcourt House time," answered Godfrey, consulting his own.

"In that case," said the banker, rising from his chair, "I must go to Miss Witchwood in the library."

He made for the door, then stopped, and facing Godfrey, said, pointing as he spoke to a decanter:

"Is that brandy?"

"Yes. Will you have some?"

"You are very good."

Godfrey nearly half filled a tumbler with brandy before the banker told him to stop. Mr. Farrands sipped it, shuddered, and then drank the brandy at one draught.

Mr. Farrands took a long pull at his cigar and then threw it into the fire. As he did so the door was opened and half of Miss Witchwood appeared.

"A weakness of mine," she said, smiling on both of them, "is punctuality. (Please indulge my weakness.)"

"A thousand apologies," said Mr. Farrands, confusedly.

Then slightly bowing his head to Godfrey, he left the dining-room and followed Miss Witchwood into the library.

(To be Continued.)

A WOMAN'S REVENGE.

A most extraordinary sensation has been produced in the high circles of Rome, says a contemporary. About three years ago the old Prince M. was married to the very juvenile daughter of the noble house of V—. The prince was enormously wealthy, but old, decrepit, and somewhat deformed.

The young girl in all her youth and beauty was taken from the convent in which she had been brought up, and under the guidance of her needy and ambitious family, and the oppressive coercion exercised by her mother, was married

to the venerable prince with great pomp and ceremony, and "all Rome" worth mentioning failed not to congratulate the mother and felicitate the needy brothers on the good luck which had befallen them all.

No sooner was the marriage concluded than the aged bridegroom carried his youthful bride away to his castle in the country, leaving however his magnificent palazzo at Rome entirely at the disposal of his mother-in-law, and the feasting and revelling going forward soon rendered the Palazzo M—the most popular rendezvous in the city.

The mother, bedecked in the family diamonds left by the young princess for her use, riding about in the prince's carriage and entertaining all her friends in his palace, was for three years the happiest woman in the world.

Meanwhile the fair young victim, resigned to her fate and resolved to do her duty by her husband, remained alone with him in the old castle, attending to his comfort and affording every solace to his infirmities.

At length the old man died and his body was brought in great state to Rome. The young widow was summoned to the city, and the family convoked for the reading of the will. The astonishment and delight of the ambitious mother and the needy brothers may be conceived when it was announced that the whole of the prince's fortune—his money, jewels, and estates—was left unconditionally to the widow, with the touching request "that she should seek another matrimonial alliance more satisfactory than the one with him had been, and recommending her not to wait until she found a man worthy of her love, for such a man she would never find in the whole world."

The scene which followed has never had a parallel in history. The young widow rose, and in her mourning robes, with pale, calm, determined countenance, "looked," says the correspondent, "like the avenging angel." She stretched forth her arm with imposing gesture, and in a stern voice exclaimed:

"If all this be really mine, as you declare, then the first use I make of my wealth and freedom will be to chase for ever from my presence those who sold me into the slavery by which these advantages have been procured. Let the palace be cleared immediately of every member of my family and all other strangers. The building will be shut up at once, as I am about to travel."

With these words she disappeared through a side door, and the sound of carriage wheels in the courtyard announced to the assembly that she had left the palace.

In vain have friends and relatives sought to interfere, in vain the highest authorities endeavoured to soften her decision. The princess remains obdurate and refuses all conciliation. The ambitious mother has retired to a convent for a while to repent of her sins, and the needy brothers are driven into exile to escape the ridicule of their position.

An example of the patience with which Scotland bears injustice at the hands of the dominant race is supplied by the bronze coinage. When this new currency was issued by the Mint it had on the reverse side the figure of Britannia seated on a hillock near the top of a lighthouse, with a ship at her feet and her shield beside her. This shield was supposed to bear the heraldic device of the Union, the English Cross of St. George with the Cross of St. Andrew placed side by side with the Irish saltire. But by some accident or machination the Scotch Cross was left out, and all these years the favourite coin of Scotchmen has been in currency under these insulting conditions. A Scotch gentleman having called the attention of the Mint to the omission a fresh die has been made, and all pence, half-pence and farthings hereafter issued will make recognition of Scotland on the shield of Britannia. The new coins will bear the Mint mark H on the reverse.



["I—I THOUGHT SHE WAS MARRIED TO YOU!" GASPED MILLY.]

MILLY.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

A FAMOUS prima donna had been giving a concert in the parlour of the large hotel at Mount —. The few last rich notes of song had died away on the air, the applause had ceased, and slowly the audience was breaking up into little knots, with the usual interchange of greetings and comments.

Outside, by one of the long windows that opened on the broad piazza, stood a young girl, bending eagerly forward. The hood of her waterproof cloak was drawn back, and the light from within fell on her fair hair, her wide-open blue eyes, and her red, parted lips.

"Oh, Dick," and the words ended with a little shiver, "wasn't it beautiful? If I could only sing like that."

Her companion, a tall, broad-shouldered young countryman, was leaning carelessly against the window-frame, with his dark, earnest eyes fixed as intently on the girl's face as hers were on the gay scene before them.

"I think—I am almost sure—I could do it if I tried," she continued, without waiting for an answer. "Listen, Dick!"

She dropped her head slightly and warbled, in a clear, flute-like voice, first softly, then louder, two or three bars of the song she had just heard, ending with a crisp little run.

"There, I knew I could do it," she cried, gleefully, "only somehow I do not exactly know how to manage my breath, and my voice seemed to run away from me. How pretty it is in there. The beautiful dresses, the long trains, the bright lights, and the flowers. How glorious it must be to stand there, with all those faces looking at you, and all those grand people listening as if their lives depended on hearing every word you sang. And the applause, Dick—I don't see how anyone could help singing after THAT."

A troubled expression passed over the young man's face.

"Let us be going, Milly," he said, abruptly, "or some of these fine people will be coming out here and find us peeping."

But the girl did not stir. Her face was still turned toward the parlour.

"No one will think of coming out here, the dampness would spoil all those pretty dresses." She pressed her face as she spoke close to the window-pane. "I believe I could stay here all night and watch," she added.

"Come, Milly," Dick spoke sternly now. "It's after half-past ten o'clock, and I promised Aunt Rhoda to bring you back early. The chances are that we shall get caught in the rain as it is—the sky is as black as pitch."

Milly yielded reluctantly to his grasp. But as they reached the edge of the piazza, and Dick sprang lightly to the ground and raised his arms to assist her, she cast a last lingering glance at the window.

"There's the beautiful lady who sang, Dick," she said, "standing there, with all those people pushing and crowding to get a chance to speak to her. I had rather be in her place than be a queen on the throne. How nice it would have been if we could have walked in at the front door—I, with my long train, and you, with your white gloves, and have sat down with the best of them, instead of creeping up on the piazza and standing outside in the darkness, listening—"

Dick lifted her to the ground. "Put this on, Milly, it's a chilly night, if it is July," said he, drawing the hood of the cloak over the girl's head and allowing his hand to linger for a moment on the rippling hair with a caressing touch. "What a flighty little Milly you are, after all! To think that a few fine dresses and gay people should be able to turn such a sensible little head as yours."

"Not so flighty as you think, perhaps," returned the girl, proudly, drawing away from him. "And it isn't the sight of the fine dresses and gay people, it is the thought of what I might do with my voice if I only had the chance. There's trouble ahead, Dick. It is coming slowly but surely. I've lain awake many a night thinking of it. Aunt Rhoda is old and feeble, and that trouble with Uncle Seth's eyesight is growing worse day by day. Ever since he had to pay those bills that he endorsed for a friend, and we had to put a mortgage on the farm, it has been very hard to get along. If his eyes should give out entirely—I hardly dare think of it—there is no one but me for them to lean upon in their old age."

"You're not the only one, Milly," said Dick, bringing his hand down heavily on his arm. "There is a good strong arm, and a willing heart to back it."

"But you have your mother and your education to look out for. No, no, it's very kind of you to feel that way, but we have no claim on you. It wouldn't be right—"

"No claim?" echoed Dick. "No claim?" His heart beat fast as he bit his lips hard to keep back the torrent of impetuous words that struggled for utterance.

He and Milly had reached the gate by this time, and in stooping to unfasten the latch he gained a little leisure for self-control.

"What have I to give her but myself?" he thought. "And what am I but a great, hulking fellow, who has not yet found out what his place is to be in the world? Better wait for ever than come to her empty-handed."

He opened the gate for her to pass through, and then, aided by his strong arms, she sprang into the waggon.

"No claim, Milly?" he repeated, bitterly. "No claim! It's a pity if the girl I have known ever since she was a baby, whom I have drawn to school on my horse, and who has been to me first playmate, then friend—I say it's a great pity if the girl who is as dear—as dear—as dear—" Dick felt the blood mounting to his forehead as he continued stammering, "as dear to me as—as a sister—cannot feel that she has the best claim on me in the world. And as for Uncle Seth, who, in his prosperous days, has done so many kind turns for mother and me, why, his claim is so plain that a blind man could see it. On, Milly, don't speak like that again. You don't know how the words hurt. Hold the reins for me a moment while I look for the lantern. Where can it be?"

Just then there was the pattering of feet on the gravel walk, and a young woman ran down to the gate swinging a lantern in her hand.

"Here's your lantern, Dick Ashley," she said, raising it so that the light showed her to be a bright, black-eyed, rosy-cheeked, rustic beauty. "I thought you would be wanting it, so I came down and took it up to the house to light it for you, and I should have

been back sooner only I was hindered in helping with the supper. Well, how did you like the concert? You haven't thanked me, Milly, for getting you a place where you could see and hear it all."

"Thank you, Kate. It was a great treat. I shall remember that voice as long as I live. And all the time the lady was singing I felt as if I was going up-up-up—I don't know where."

"Well, Milly," and Dick laid his hand on her arm, "please don't go up—we want you down here just at present. You see, Kate, whenever Milly gets into her romantic flights I am the weight to pull her down to sober common sense; otherwise, we might lose her."

Kate's keen eyes caught the movement of Dick's hand, and a scowl passed over her handsome face.

"Milly loves music so well," she said, "and understands so much more about it than she feels differently from us. Now, for my part, Dick, I think Milly's voice just as fine as the one you heard to-night, and I believe she could sing just as well if she had the teaching."

"Milly doesn't need any teaching. She sings well enough as it is."

"Oh, Kate. Oh, Dick," said Milly, deprecatingly, while Dick held out his hand impatiently for the lantern.

"I do," reiterated Kate. "It's the solemn truth. I only wish I had Milly's voice. You wouldn't catch me settling down in a stupid place like this, when I might get to be rich and famous. There's no end to the luck a good voice brings. Why, there's Miss B——, up at the house, the lady who sang to-night, they say she was a poor country girl, and someone found out what a voice she had and gave her lessons, and now she is just rolling in money. She takes care of her mother, that grey-haired lady, who sat near the door, and does so much good besides. And I can see, as I wait on her at table, how much everyone, even those grand 'stuck up' people, thinks of her."

Kate was the daughter of one of the village farmers. She taught school the greater part of the year, and during vacation eked out her scanty income by waiting at table at the Mount Hotel.

"Wait a moment, Dick," pleaded Milly, as the young man murmured something about its being time to go. "How long will Miss B—— stay at the hotel, Kate?"

"Only this week. Then she goes abroad to rest. She gave that concert last night to help one of the poor women at the hotel. She is a kind body, and seems to be always ready to do a friendly act."

The young horse darted forward as he felt the sudden sting of Dick's lash.

"Good night, Kate," called the young man. "You and Milly will catch your deaths standing out here in the damp."

Kate stood for a moment listening to the sound of the retreating wheels.

"Look sharp, Dick Ashley," she said, with a mocking laugh, "or you'll lose your pretty bird. You think you have her safe caged, but for all your watchfulness she may fly out into the world and leave you, and I AM THE ONE WHO HAS OPENED THE DOOR. I've seen that Milly has been uneasy in her mind this long while, thinking of the old folks' trouble and wanting to earn something to help them. It only needed those words from me to start the thing. With Milly once well out of the way Dick might have eyes for girls who are far more handsome than she. It's a game worth playing, at all events, and I am willing to risk everything on it."

Dick, alarmed and vexed at the turn conversation had taken, drove home in silence, and Milly was too busy with her half-formed plans to say more than a word or two.

"Good night, Milly," he said, tenderly, as he unlocked the door of the farmhouse for her. "I shall not see you again for three weeks. I am going to start to-morrow for Cousin John's. He is the one who has promised to give me a little help in my education, and I shall make him quite a visit. Don't borrow any trouble. There will be a way provided without your putting

your shoulder to the wheel; trust to me for that. So go to sleep without a thought of what is to come. The 'darkest hour,' you know, 'is just before the dawn.'"

The day after the concert Aunt Rhoda sent Milly up to the hotel to tell the housekeeper that she could have "that week's churning" for the hotel table if she wished it. The young girl had delivered the message and was walking slowly down the broad, well-kept walk when she noticed that the great piazza was nearly deserted, it being the hour when almost all the ladies were dressing for dinner.

But one lady sat by the side of the front door reading, and as she raised her eyes from her book Milly saw that it was the singer whom she had heard the night before.

It was a strange thing for shy little Milly to do, but before she thought she found herself standing before the lady, who was looking at her curiously.

"If you please, ma'am," said Milly, blushing, "I heard you sing last night, and it was so beautiful. And I think I can sing too, and we are so poor, and need the money so much at home. I wonder if you would tell me if my voice is worth anything?"

The lady dropped her book.

"What is it, my dear?" she asked, kindly. "I don't quite understand."

"If you would only PLEASE see if I could sing, ma'am."

Milly as she spoke wrung her hands nervously.

"Oh, you want me to try your voice. Why, of course I will. Come into the parlour and you shall sing for me and then I will sing a little for you. Don't be afraid. There is never anyone there at this hour. We can have it all to ourselves."

She led the way, and Milly followed timidly. The large parlour was deserted. Seating herself at the piano Miss B—— ran her fingers lightly over the keys and then asked:

"What can you sing, my child?"

"All the old hymns and songs; Uncle Seth likes the old Scotch songs best of all."

"Do you know this?" playing "Within a Mile o' Edinboro' Town," and she looked up at Milly as she spoke.

Milly nodded assent.

"Very well, now sing, right out."

Milly's voice trembled and hesitated at first, but the accompaniment gave her courage, and then it poured out rich and strong, filling the large room, and echoing through the hall and corridors.

The lady paused in astonishment.

"Why, of course you can sing. My child, you have a glorious voice—now, go on—"

After the song was finished Miss B—— tried Milly's voice in sustained notes and scales, and at the end of the brief lesson the delighted pupil found herself sitting by the teacher's side, pouring into her sympathetic ears all her troubles and fears and hopes and plans.

It was the talk of the whole town when just a week from that time Miss B—— left for Italy, taking Milly with her. It had required much persuasion on her part, but when she had satisfied Uncle Seth that Milly would be good hands he reluctantly gave his consent.

Miss B—— undertook to pay all expenses, and the only condition of the agreement was a solemn promise that Milly should not sing in opera, the good old man having inherited from Puritan ancestors a horror of the stage.

When Dick came home he was stunned by the news of Milly's departure. Great too were his astonishment and grief when he found she had gone without one little note or word of special farewell.

"Did she leave nothing with you, Kate?" he asked, as he overtook that young woman on her way to singing-class.

It was too dark for him to notice Kate's flushed face and confused manner.

"No," said Kate, slowly; "the fact was Milly's head was completely filled with her new friends and new life. And she did not have all the luck, Dick. I have been appointed postmistress. It will be far better

than tramping through the snow to teach tire-some children."

But Dick hardly heard what she said. He was thinking of Milly.

"It's but the beginning of the end," he murmured. "She will never be the same Milly again. Oh! why did they send her out into the world away from those who love her best?"

He wrote her kindly, once, twice, thrice, four times without receiving an answer; then, in a fit of indignation, he wrote to Miss B——, demanding an explanation, and that too failed to win a reply.

"Are you sure you put on the right stamps?" he asked of Postmistress Kate, and she assured him that she "was sure."

They had letters regularly at the farmhouse, however, and Kate seemed to be the favourite correspondent. Dick began to look on her as the only link left between him and Milly.

He left after awhile for a neighbouring town to study for the ministry, but came home frequently, and never failed to pass a part of the time with Kate, for in spite of Milly's cruel neglect he found himself hungering for the slightest tidings of her.

For the first two years Milly wrote that she was studying hard and making rapid progress. Presents came to the farmhouse and money to pay the interest on the mortgage. There were also pretty little gifts sent through Kate to old friends, Dick being the only one forgotten.

At last came the news of a grand triumph. Milly had sung in public and her success was assured. Various extracts from foreign journals were copied by the papers, lauding the beauty and talent of the young singer.

Then Milly pleaded for two or three years more and accompanied the letter with a cheque to pay off a portion of the mortgage, and with this came a photograph of herself in grande toilette.

Meanwhile the years went by. Seven had passed. During that time gentle Aunt Rhoda had been carried to her last rest and slept in the village cemetery. Milly's money, however, procured a capable housekeeper for Uncle Seth in the person of one of his nieces.

Dick too had been fighting his way in the world, and climbing step by step. The Reverend Richard Ashley was beginning to be widely known as the able, earnest, young pastor of a large and flourishing church.

Uncle Seth finally placed himself in the hands of a skilful oculist for an operation on his eyes. It proved unsuccessful, and the good old man was doomed to total blindness. Dick heard of the result and hurried to the farm to offer what comfort he could.

It was a beautiful day in June when he stepped upon the platform of the station at Mount——. In front of him stood a lady who had just left the forward carriage. Something familiar in the quick step and carriage of the slender figure caused Dick to start violently.

The lady was dressed in deep mourning and wore a heavy crape veil over her face. Having spoken to one of the porters she passed into the waiting-room.

Dick felt strongly impelled to follow her, but chiding himself for his curiosity turned on his heel and walked away.

Across the track was a footpath leading to a short cut through the fields and woods to the farm; but Dick had a business errand at one of the houses near by and he followed the main road.

When he left the farmer's house he turned aside from the highway, and crossing a field reached the bypath to the farm. How the old memories came surging into his mind! How often had Milly and he walked under those trees! Yonder was the little brook with the broad stepping stones which they had crossed a hundred times.

He strode forward rapidly and stood by its brink. In the middle of the stream on a large flat stone stood the lady whom he had seen at the station. The recent heavy rains had washed away some of the stones, and a wide space of rushing water rolled between her and the bank.

It was but the work of a moment to roll a stone into the stream and to assist her to spring to the other bank. As she threw back her veil to thank him Dick raised his eyes and saw—Milly herself.

"I came but yesterday," she explained, after an awkward silence. "Miss B—died suddenly, and her mother and I left at once for home. I did not telegraph because I wanted to surprise them at the farm. Are they well?"

"You have not heard then?" returned Dick, gently. "It is as you feared. Uncle Seth's eyes have given out."

"Oh! why did they keep it from me?" she cried. "I would have come at once. It is a mercy that I am able to take care of him."

They walked along slowly, talking of Uncle Seth and his affliction.

"It seems but yesterday that I left," murmured Milly. "Thank God, if warrens prove fickle there are some things that do not change. This path, this brook, seem the very same that I left years ago, and these trees are not altered, even the little flowers are in the old places. How is—Kate?"

She spoke hesitatingly now.

"Kate?" he repeated. "Kate? I do not know."

"Do not know?"

"She left here four years ago, married a gay young clerk, and went to London to live."

"I—I thought she was married to you," gasped Milly. "In every letter she spoke of seeing you, being with you; and the others wrote in the same way. She told me she was going to be married, and I supposed, of course, it was to you."

For the first time Dick smiled.

"I did see a great deal of her; it was the only way I could hear from you," he said.

They had reached the short lane by this time that led to the farmhouse.

"One word, Milly," said Dick. "I have a right to know. Tell me what I have ever done that you should answer none of my letters, that you should leave without a word of farewell?"

"It is the very question I have been longing to put to you. I left a long, long letter for you with Kate. I wrote again and again. I sent messages and gifts by her, until hope died in my heart. And all these long, weary years, poor, little, home-sick, far-away Milly has been waiting and praying for one word of encouragement from her old friend—is it possible that Kate—"

"I see it all now," replied Dick. "She has very nearly made a total wreck of two happy lives."

The sound of a voice singing an old, familiar hymn came through the open door of the farmhouse. Milly lifted her finger to Dick, and hurried through the hall into the kitchen.

Uncle Seth, with a bandage over his eyes, sat in an arm-chair, with his niece on a low stool at his feet. As the young woman arose, in surprise, Milly motioned for her to be silent.

"Why do you stop?" queried the old man, impatiently. "That was one of Milly's favourite hymns. But you don't sing it as she did. Go on, Sopola."

The girl obeyed. But after the first line a rich, clear voice joined in the refrain. The old man started to his feet.

"Milly," he cried, groping with outstretched arms. "It is—it must be Milly come back again."

Milly threw her arms around his neck and answered, brokenly:

"It is Milly, come to be eyes for you in your blindness—to stay with you always—to share her good fortune with you—to leave you never, never more."

A smile lighted the meek, patient face.

"I am content now. It is Milly, come back to me, and—to Richard," he continued, hearing Dick's voice.

Dick could not speak, but his earnest eyes put the question that his tongue refused to utter.

Milly's lips parted in a happy laugh as she stroked the old man's silver locks.

"It is Milly come back to you—to you and to

Richard," she added, gently, placing her hand in the young man's eager grasp.

THE CAMEL OF THE NORTH.

In a chapter on the reindeer Mr. Vincent, in his book entitled "Norse, Lapp and Finn," gives his personal observations of this useful animal, which has been appropriately termed the camel of the North. He tells us that most of them are of a dark slate colour, though a few are brown, and some are quite white. They are hardly three feet in height and perhaps four or five in length.

The great size of their antlers presents a strong contrast to their comparatively small bodies. The antlers of a buck are often as much as four feet in length, with branches called brow antlers projecting far forward from their bases, and with spurs spread out fan-wise at their upper ends.

Small as he is, a reindeer is able to carry for long distances about one hundred and thirty pounds, or he can draw over the glazed snow, when harnessed to a sledge, two hundred and fifty pounds.

Its hoof is as admirably adapted for travelling in the snow and morasses of the frigid zone as the hoof of the camel is for the sand and billocks of the torrid belt. In Lapland a reindeer will readily travel ten miles an hour all day, and there is an instance on record of twenty miles having been made in a single hour as a test of speed.

In 1699 a reindeer drew an officer, with important dispatches, eight hundred miles in two days, or an average of sixteen and two-thirds miles an hour.

This astounding feat ended in the death of the deer, whose portrait, we are told, is still preserved in the summer palace of Drottningholm, near Stockholm.

All that we derive from the horse, the ox and the sheep, this wonderful little animal furnishes the Laplander. Much of the meat, in its fresh state, is cooked and used for food, but some after being cut into thin slices is dried or smoked, and then takes the place of bread. The pemmican which the Arctic explorers use is made from reindeer flesh.

The milk, which is excessively rich, is drunk fresh, or made into a rank and unctuous cheese and a kind of butter that tastes like suet. From the cheese an oil is made which is the sovereign specific for frozen feet.

The whey is used for drink, and is sometimes converted into a fermented beverage which is very similar to koumiss.

The skins of the deer furnish the winter tents of the Laplanders, their blankets and articles of clothing, and, in short, serve almost every purpose to which we apply cloth or leather. The women prepare from the tendons, by rolling them with their hands upon their cheeks, a thread which surpasses all others in strength and durability. The antlers supply the requisites of their household and culinary apparatus.

The reindeer, without which the Lapps could not exist, are a very precarious possession, owing to the difficulty of procuring their subsistence through the winter.

The moss, or lichen, on which they feed is often buried beneath as much as six feet of snow, which the deer themselves have to remove with their feet, and follow their noses. Mr. Vincent tells us that the reindeer moss is capable of being used for human food; its nutritive properties are derived from the starch it contains, and the taste is not unpleasant when the moss is boiled with reindeer milk.

MISCELLANEOUS.

In the new haunts—which are roomy, and into which three passengers can be put—there are to be found small looking-glasses, trays for cigar ash, and "a box of lights." Some drivers

go further and supply rugs to cover the legs of their fares, and others have small clothes-brushes for the passenger to brush himself up with on a muddy day.

A discovery has recently been made which shatters an illusion fondly clung to. It turns out that the so-called Golden Axe sent to England by the King of Ashantee is only gold plated over iron. Of course this discovery, though painful in itself, does not lessen the political value of the presentation. Captain Barrow, who is just going back to the Gold Coast, tells that the King in handing him the axe was unmistakably genuine in the protestations of friendship. His chief anxiety was that it should be delivered personally to the Queen. "It is from the King to the Queen" was the phrase he repeatedly used.

Some persons have singular ideas of joviality. At a large ball given in the South of England the only music provided was an organ. It would require the constitution of a Mark Tapley, who found most things in life "too jolly," to enjoy a polka to such solemn strains! The services of the church organist were retained for the occasion!

The Countess of Bective is looking after our woollen manufactures, and the Hon. Mrs. Percy Mitford is performing the like service for our silk trade. The Manchester manufacturers are, however, looking after the calico trade themselves. A grand ball with the object of showing the variety and perfection to which the art of calico printing has arrived and the adaptability of the fabric to ball dresses was given recently in the Manchester Town Hall. There were about 1,200 guests, and all the ladies' dresses were made of British printed cotton. The latest designs of the trade, and even some which are not yet in the market, had been made up into ordinary ball dresses. Many very handsome costumes were worn, and the display showed that these cottons can be as effectively treated as more fashionable materials. A number of French artists, employed as designers by French calico printers, were present at the ball, and most of the leading home trade houses in London and other places were represented.

A FREE TRADE hymn is the latest novelty. It was introduced at Liverpool by a Unitarian minister.

It is said that the Duke of Edinburgh is composing an operetta, the scene of which is laid in a Russian village.

LACE is more profusely used than ever. Lace bags are beautiful, and add much to the delicate finishing of a fashionable opera or theatre toilet. These lovely bags are held by a silver or gold chain suspended from the belt or waistband on the right side. Exquisite lace muffs, adorned with ribbon bows and clusters of flowers, are fashionable.

"MANCHON" is the new name for the dainty little affairs that once were called muffs. And now the little hands are tucked away into a "manchon" composed of lace flowers and plush, instead of the good, old-fashioned and substantial muffs.

House gowns trimmed with feathers are much affected by æsthetic young ladies.

A NEW chessboard, on which the figures retain their positions in spite of shocks occurring, e.g., in train or on board ship, has been lately patented. The action is magnetic; the board is of iron, and acts as an armature to small magnets screwed to the lower parts of the figures.

MR. BARNUM'S announcement of handsome premiums for the most beautiful specimens of the male and female sex in America, to be served up in what is described as a banquet of beauty for the admirers of his gorgeous and transcendent procession and his chaste and unequalled show, does something to establish the standard of relative value between the beauty of man and woman. Twenty thousand dollars for the handsomest woman and ten thousand dollars for the handsomest man is, however, a decision in hard cash which all can understand, and from which hereafter we presume there will be no appeal.

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gives a delicate blush to the complexion that charmingly enhances its lily whiteness, and there is no hue in the whole range of colours that is so becoming to a brunette as a rich scarlet. A blonde can wear blues of all grades, while only the light indigo blue is suited to a brunette, and there is the mode golden dye that is not at all congruous to a blonde's fairness; but fashion declares that the alabaster beauties look lovely adorned in garments from the straw tint to the glowing orange, providing that blue is cunningly and delicately intermixed. Fashion also proclaims that heavy materials, such as velvet and plush, are for brunettes; and why "this is thus" no explanation is given. Perhaps in the world of dress complexion is consonant with weight, since there are plushes and velvets of extremely pale off colours.

A much more sensible scheme than the roofing-in of Regent Street with glass would be to plant trees along the edges of the pavement. The experiments on the Thames Embankment and Cromwell Road have shown that success is likely to follow all such efforts. The value of the shade cast by trees planted in such positions can only be rightly estimated by those who have experienced their benefits in tropical towns. The heat of summer in this country, more especially in London, calls for this natural protection, for the shadow cast on the pavement by trees has the double effect of acting as a protection from the rays of the person and on the stones under foot. A further extension of street tree-planting is now being carried out in the Brompton Road, near Brompton Square. Planting should be much more general than it is.

The gas companies are now showing us in one or two leading thoroughfares what they might do and could do, if they chose, for the whole metropolis. If every street were lighted as are portions of Oxford Street, Piccadilly, and Queen Victoria Street, we should not be in such a hurry to cheapen the electric light. In Piccadilly especially the difference between the illuminating power of the old lamps and the new is most marked; indeed it is almost as great as the difference between the best form of the gas light and the best form of the electric light.

The proposal has been made to have a balloon gathering in London like that which will shortly take place in Paris.

ONE of our magistrates, Mr. Barstow, has decided that presents given to sweethearts are not recoverable in a court of law, even when a breach of promise of marriage is the plea advanced for their return. If this fact prevents those from making presents who would be mean enough to solicit their return, it is a very good thing.

Was there ever a city so bent on destroying the characteristic marks of its own antiquity as London? Thanet House, Aldersgate Street, is doomed now, and will soon be replaced by a block of warehouses. It is one of Inigo Jones's fine old mansions, and was formerly the town residence of the Tuftons, Earls of Thanet, who only appear to have occupied it for a short time when it passed into the hands of the Earls of Shaftesbury. It is noticeable on account of its curious front, which, although having the appearance of stone, is really of red brick stuccoed over. The original staircase remains, as also a beautiful specimen of old carving in the banqueting-hall, the design of which is unquestionably attributed to Inigo Jones, and a fine specimen of old oak panelling.

Will silly women never be warned? One of their tribe has just brought an action against a dealer in cosmetics, whose nostrums, she says, have changed the skin of her face from a pimply condition to a mass of scars.

THE spacious wing being added to the Jesuit College at Hales Place, near Canterbury, is rapidly approaching completion, and when finished will afford accommodation for a much larger number of students than are now located there. Indeed, in the aggregate, the old and new buildings are arranged to provide residence for 1,000 of the youths exiled with their instructors from France. When the work now in hand is finished another wing will probably be begun,

and if this intention be carried out the building will be one of the largest in the county.

GROWING OLD.

WHAT if we grow old? Shall we laugh
or sigh,
As summer's roses are passing by?
When no longer the nesting sparrows
call,
And the dead leaves drop in the dying
fall?
Let us laugh as the gold glows bright
in the leaf,
And garner in gladness the ripened
sheaf.
Let us sing! let us sing! as the hours
fly fast,
Though the scented bloom of the May
is past.

What if we grow old? And what care
we,
Though the blue sky fade with the
leafy tree?
Our hearts are young and our spirits
sing
Of the glad, deep joys that the snows
will bring.
The frost-kissed whispers with icy
breath,
Of a loyal trust that can know no
death.
Oh! the dearest of life has been left
untold,
That we never can know till we're
growing old.

Think you that the apple buds that
swung
Frail, airy sprays in the ether hung,
Were half as fair as the dainty mould,
Of fruit aflame in its mail of gold?
Think you that the swallow's first notes
that rang,
Were clear as the last glad song he
sang?
Oh! the blithest of life has been left
untold,
That the year knows not till it's grow-
ing old.

What if we grow old? Are our loves
all dead,
With the brown beneath and the grey
o'erhead?
Ah, no! there are hearts we can aid
and cheer,
By word of kindness, by counsel dear.
Let the snows fall softly about our feet,
We welcome their coming, their pre-
sence sweet.
We can gayly laugh as the hours fly
past,
For pain and sorrow, joy comes at last.

What if we grow old? Shall it grieve
us now,
Though youth's glow vanish from cheek
and brow?
Hand clasped in hand and heart reading
heart,
We are strong in the faith that can
ne'er depart.
We have learned that the autumn out-
vies the spring,
We have learned that in shadow our
souls can sing,
Oh! the sweetest of life has been left
untold,
That we never can know till we're
growing old. H. M. S.

STATISTICS.

THE consumption of cotton in England in 1881 amounted to 3,244,370 bales, as against 3,078,260 bales in 1880. The present rate per

week for England is 70,000 bales of 400 lbs., as against 67,000 bales last year, and for the Continent 58,000 bales, as against 55,000 bales a year ago.

TWENTY years have now elapsed since the repeal of the paper duty, and a few facts bearing on the progress of the trade in the interval may be of interest. According to the "Paper and Printing Trades' Journal," of raw materials we imported in 1861, 20,485 tons of rags and other paper-making substances; in 1880 that had increased to 258,223 tons. Our exports of paper in 1861 were about 32,000 cwt., valued at £361,000; in 1880 this had increased to 472,000 cwt., valued at £1,107,000. Imports of foreign paper have increased during the same period from 100,000 cwt., in 1861 to 1,022,000 cwt. in 1880.

GEMS OF THOUGHT.

STUDY wisdom and you will reap pleasure.
THE wicked live to eat; the good to live.
SIN has a great many tools, but a lie is a handle which fits them all.

A good conscience seats the mind on a rich throne of lasting quiet, but horror waits upon a guilty soul.

INNOCENCE is a flower which withers when touched, but blooms not again, though watered by tears.

HE that voluntarily continues in ignorance is guilty of all the crimes which ignorance produces.

WE must look for happiness in the world, not in the things of the world, but within ourselves, in our tempers and in our hearts.

THE wisest man may be wiser to-day than yesterday, and to-morrow than he is to-day. Total freedom from change would imply total freedom from error.

"ORDER is heaven's first law," regularity is nature's great rule; hence regularity in eating, sleeping and exercise has a very large share in securing a long and healthful life.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

DELICIOUS BREAKFAST DISH.—For a family of six take three cups of mashed potatoes, one half a cup of flower and half a teaspoon of sweet milk, two well-beaten eggs, a little salt; mix well together, shape them small and drop into hot lard, or roll them into little balls, and fry them in a wire basket in boiling lard.

CHICKEN PUDDING.—Cut up the chickens and stew until tender. Then take them from the gravy and spread on a flat dish to cool, having first well seasoned them with butter, pepper and salt. Make a batter of one quart of milk, three cups of flour, three tablespoonfuls of melted butter, one-half teaspoonful of soda, one teaspoonful of cream tartar, a little salt. Butter a pudding-dish and put a layer of the chicken at the bottom and then a cupful of the batter over it. Proceed till the dish is full. The batter must form the crust. Bake an hour, and serve the thickened gravy in a gravy boat.

PIE-CRUST.—To make a nice, plain pie-crust use half as much butter as flour, and sufficient very cold water to make a very stiff dough; if the butter is salt wash it through several cold waters, pat it dry in a clean towel, dust it with flour and put it in a cold place until the pastry-board is prepared and the flour is sifted; then with a sharp knife chop half the butter into the flour, wet it with cold water to a stiff dough, roll this out to the thickness of half an inch, dot it over with bits of butter, using about a tablespoonful, fold it once and roll it out; cut off enough for the bottom crust, roll the remainder half an inch thick, dot it with butter and fold and roll it; repeat this process rapidly until all the butter is used; use this pastry for the cover; work as rapidly as possible in the coolest place you can command, and bake the pies in a hot oven.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

T. C. C.—The colouring principle of the hair is in some constitutions secreted by organs so delicate that bodily disorder or mental affliction will gradually destroy their functions, and the hair will not only turn grey but become white as snow. The hair should be washed at least once a week. Salt water is not injurious. The plucking out of grey hairs is "love's labour lost." Let them alone.

A. D.—For preserving the polished surface of iron or steel from oxidation nothing is better than pure paraffine. It should be warmed, rubbed on, and then wiped off with a woollen rag. It will not change the colour, whether bright or blue, and will protect the surface better than any varnish.

LOVELY MAY AND DOT.—Adolphus means noble helper; Stella, a star; Ursula, little bear (significant of courage).

RACER.—Bendor beat Robert the Devil in the Derby—Robert the Devil beat Bendor in the St. Leger.

J. G.—To purify silver, dissolve it in nitric acid slightly diluted, and add common salt, which throws down the whole of the silver in the form of chloride. To reduce it into a metallic state, the chloride must be repeatedly washed with distilled water and placed in a zinc cup. A little diluted sulphuric acid being added, the chloride is soon reduced. The silver, when thoroughly washed, is quite pure.

H. T. W.—The decoction is intended to be used internally—dose at discretion.

YOUNG ARTIST.—The secretary would no doubt if applied to furnish you with all particulars.

A. D.—If steak is tough, put three tablespoonfuls of salad oil and one tablespoonful of vinegar, well mixed together, on a large flat dish, and on this lay the steak. Salt must never be put on the steak before it is cooked. The steak must lay in this tender-making mixture for at least half an hour to a side. The toughest steak will succumb to this and be perfectly tender when cooked.

E. H. F. W.—Correspondence of the nature referred to has been discontinued.

JOHN A.—The sons can certainly be compelled to pay for their father's maintenance if they are considered to be in a position to do so.

C. W.—With different nations and at different periods the year has commenced at various dates, and at this time with certain Eastern nations it has no fixed date. The Christian or vulgar era is now almost universally employed in Christian countries, and is even used by some Eastern nations. Its commencement is the 1st of January in the fourth year of the 194th Olympiad, the 753rd from the foundation of Rome, and the 4714th of the Julian period. It is usually supposed to begin with the year of the birth of Christ, but there are various opinions with regard to the year in which that event took place. This epoch was introduced in Italy in the sixth century by Dionysius Exiguus, and was ordered to be used by bishops by the Council of Chelsea in 816, but was not generally employed for centuries. Dionysius, the author or inventor of the Christian era, made the commencement of the year the 25th of March, and it is only within a few centuries that the 1st of January has been generally adopted as such. Among the various Christian nations it was begun on Christmas, Easter, the 25th of March, and various other dates.

H. G. F.—Orchids are a large family of plants the typical genus of which is orchis. They are found in nearly all countries except those upon the borders of the frozen zones, and those of excessive dryness. In northern localities the species are terrestrial, usually inhabiting marshy places or shady woods; in tropical countries many of them grow upon the branches of trees in dense and humid forests, without contact with the earth, deriving their nourishment not from the wood to which they are attached, but from the air. Though a large family, they yield but few useful products, the most important commercially being the pods of several species of vanilla. The tubers of some species contain a form of nutritive starch, associated with a peculiar gum; these are collected and dried, and are found in commerce as salsap. Orchids are among the most valued of cultivated flowers, some for their beauty, others for their fragrance, and others for their grotesque forms. These are sometimes wonderful. The flowers of one species are quite like the mouth of a cuttle-fish; in

others the resemblance to a large spider is equally strong, and in several species the flowers almost exactly imitate various insects. This is notably the case in the butterfly orchis, the flowers of which in size, form and colour are like a gaudy butterfly. The variety known as the "Christ-plant" or "Holy Spirit plant" is a native of Central America. The column in the plant bears so strong a resemblance to a bird as to require scarcely any effort of the fancy to make it appear like a dove, of the form which artists choose in typifying the Holy Spirit. This has caused it to be regarded by the Spanish Americans with veneration and as of some supernatural significance, and under the name of el Spirito Santo it is employed in religious festivals. It is now found occasionally in the collections of those who cultivate orchids, though seldom seen of the size and vigour it attains in its native country. Among wealthy horticulturists the cultivation of orchids is often a passion, and almost incredible prices are paid for fine specimens of rare species.

ASHES.

I FOLDED strips of paper there
Of every tint and hue,
Bright as the Western glories when
They brighten up the view.
Each held a promise, sacred once,
And each had held a heart;
And on the glowing embers there
I laid them each apart.

The bursting flames joined over them,
And with a withering sigh
I saw the hopes of youth and love
In glowing ashes lie.
Ah, heart of mine, and memory,
Why dwell you still on one?
The ashes yet are glowing bright,
But life is all undone.

A light glows o'er the meadow far
And through the woods between.
Oh, light of love, come back to me,
It burns for me, I ween;
Strange fancies o'er me gather thick,
A ray of light I grasp—
It may not be. Oh, life! Oh, love!
My empty hands I clasp.

Oh, ashes, glowing bright and red,
With deep and fated breath
I gaze upon your greying light
And sigh me, "Is it death?"
Oh, God! will only ashes grey
Lie on my heart's hearth-stone?
Are all the vivid dreams of life
To die out one by one?

Up, up the chimney—yes, I see
The lighter ashes go,
The dying embers cease to flame,
And greyer still they grow.
Oh, love and heart and memory,
There's little yet is left.
Its only ashes, grey and cold,
Of life and joy bereft.

I yearn, grey ashes, how I yearn
To see you beam once more,
To see your bonnie flame of red
Begin me o'er and o'er.
Love, joy and hope no more can be
The flames that brighten life.
Ashes, cold ashes, whiter now,
There's neither joy nor strife.

PUZZLES.

XLII.

TRANSLATIONS.

1. As I stand, I am an article of wearing apparel; change the vowels consecutively, and I become a playful female name, a dangerous consequence in a duel, the temper of a violent man, and a Laplander's dwelling-place.

2. As I stand, I'm commonly known by my bark; change the vowels, and you will have me at your fingers' ends; next I am sometimes called Jupiter; I then become a matter of weight, and, proverbially, a large quantity.

3. As I stand, I signify a kind of excommunication; change the vowels, I become a man's name, a French adjective expressive of satisfaction, and a capital theme for a dance where there is plenty.

XLIII.

CHARADE.

He was weary and worn with his journey
When my first came, a welcome guest;
And my next, who had borne him the livelong day,
Was glad of her fodder and rest.
And the traveller supped right sumptuously,
And, while silence kept watch and ward,
He slumbered; but, oh, that stifled cry!
Is the sentinel off his guard?
Nay, but Nature is wroth at her broken law,
And she summons a shadowy band
And bids my whole mind the culprit fast
With her viewless but strong right hand.

XLIV.

GEOGRAPHICAL PUZZLE.

A cape in Siberia. A city on the Po. A lake in Switzerland. A continent. An ocean. A river in Bulgaria. A state in Germany. The centrals, downward and across, name a large division of land.

XLV.

ENIGMAS.

1.

I am restless and wandering, steady and fixed,
And you know not one hour what I may be next;
I'm piercing and clear, I'm heavy and dull,
Expressive and languid, contracted and full.
A blow makes me run, though I have not a limb,
Though I neither have sin nor a bladder I swim.
Like many more couples, my partner and I
At times will look cross at each other, and shy;
Yet still though we differ in what we're about,
One will do all the work when the other is out.

2.

Whole I'm an instrument, standard and plane,
I'm smooth and flat, also even to sin;
Masons and builders have used me, I ween,
To adjust their works; I am right, I deem?
Backward and forward I'm still all the same.
If in me the number of letters you would like to gain,
Take out my middle, and you'll see it quite plain.

3.

If one thousand and one you trace,
Together with two fifties they will make,
For certain, the name of a place
Where a thief you may easily take.

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLES.

XXXVI.

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XXXVII.

Arm-chair.

XXXVIII.

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TYRO	IDLY	NOBLE
		SNEER

XXXIX.

The letter I.

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AIAIA		TENET
GIG		TEN
A		T

XLI.

1. Chin. 2. Taro.

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